Commentary

VOLUME NINETY ONE • NUMBER SIX • JUNE 1991

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Elie Kedourie

Of Heroes, Villains, and Valets
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Accounting for Anti-Semitism
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The Last Communist
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A Great 20th-Century Novelist
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Rabbinical Eyes—A Story
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Books in Review:
Joseph Adelson / Robert Alter / Michael Lind / Daniel Pipes / Chester E. Finn, Jr.

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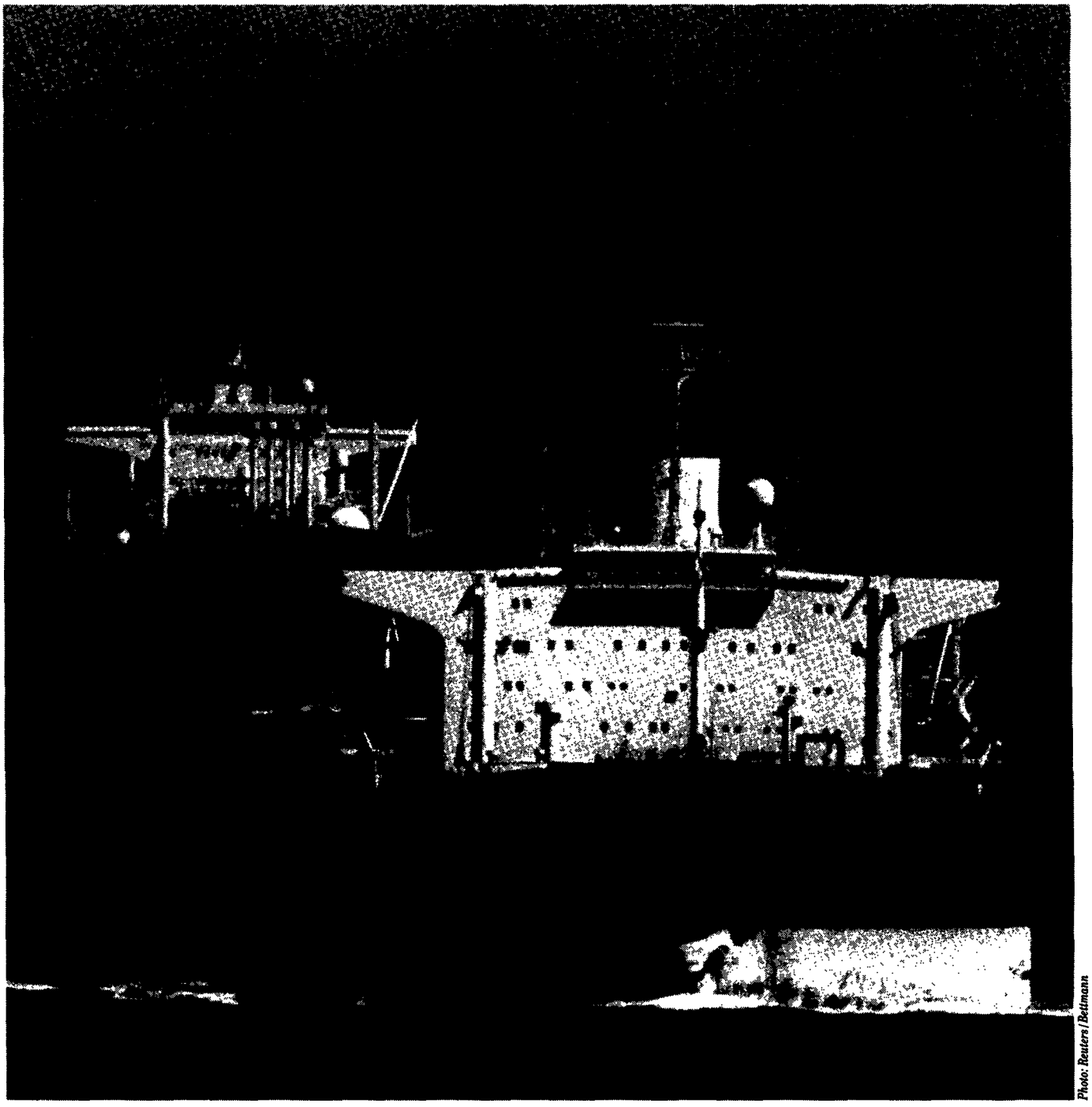

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Letters from Readers

Black Leaders

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his very fine article, "The Question of Black Leadership" [January], Arch Puddington asks why black leaders like Benjamin Hooks of the NAACP and Mayor David Dinkins of New York City do not speak out against the absurdities of Marion Barry, Louis Farrakhan, and Sonny Carson. The answer to his question is that black American culture has been tribalized.

Tribalism is totalitarian, in that the tribe is everything and the individual nothing outside the tribe. Penalties for going against the tribe can be severe. Shelby Steele describes this phenomenon very well in his book, *The Content of Our Character*. Steele grew up believing in the middle-class values of work, deferred gratification, and individual achievement. During the 1960's, however, under the influence of the Black Power movement, he found himself becoming tribalized, feeling that "blackness," in and of itself, was much more important than individual achievement. The encouragement given by the white Left to this nonsense seems to me to have been a crime of the first order.

Today in the inner city a black pupil who strives to do well in class is accused of "acting white," and he may be harassed or beaten up. Interestingly, Shelby Steele says that the desired model of "blackness" is the black street thug. . . .

Notably, however, some important blacks are refusing to play the tribal game. As in Douglas Wilder's remark, quoted by Mr. Puddington: "I'm a governor who happens to be black, not a black who happens to be governor." . . .

The tragedy of the black tribe is . . . that it defines itself by its rejections and hatreds: of whites, of Jews, of Koreans, of high-achievers of any stamp. Such tribalism is suicidal. . . .

JEFFREY HART
Lyme, New Hampshire

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was very heartened by the good sense and courage displayed in Arch Puddington's inquiry into the situation of black leadership in our country. Anybody who, by participating in public affairs or media today, comes into regular contact with the partisans of the new black ultra-nationalism cannot help wondering whether we do not face an alienation from our historic American sense of unity that is more dangerous than any other such phenomenon in our history.

Arch Puddington concentrates on the big Eastern cities, but in the San Francisco Bay Area many of the political fantasies he describes have entered the common wisdom. We continually hear, in the streets as in the public prints, references to a "plan" for genocide of blacks through drugs, the law, and AIDS; anti-Semitism crudely masked as criticism of Israel; promotion of Louis Farrakhan, the "Public Enemy" rappers, or Spike Lee as the greatest black leaders since Martin Luther King, Jr., if not King's betters.

On campuses like Berkeley, Stanford, or the San Francisco Art Institute, in the offices of literary magazines as well as in municipal institutions, these views and others like them are increasingly mimicked by white academics, students, intellectuals, and political operatives anxious to prove their "political correctness." . . .

It is especially important to note Mr. Puddington's emphasis on the Stalinist—there is no other word for it—origin of anti-Semitic black officials like Gus Savage, for in any debate on these issues in the Bay Area the classic Stalinist methodology is immediately encountered. The most typical such gambit consists in the spurious claim that a defender of one or another "right-wing" position is known for racist remarks in private. Such slanders are difficult to rebut.

A common thread in both the Stalinism of the 1930's and the black ultra-nationalism of today is the emphasis on the most baroque kind of conspiracies. A leading black but non-ultra-nationalist scholar, Robert Smith, was hired by the political-science department at San Francisco State University, and sought to teach a course in black politics in that department rather than the department of ethnic studies. His hiring was attacked as a maneuver to undermine ethnic studies! In the same way, Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter, the Jewish labor leaders from Poland executed

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by Stalin during the war, were labeled agents of Hitler. . . .

The growing acceptance of such hysterical claims as a legitimate part of public debate is the most disturbing aspect of the whole situation. For if there is no repudiation of crude anti-Semitism or conspiratorialism from the mouths of black leaders, then how can they be repudiated if taken up by others? The gates of hell are ajar, if only very slightly, and I need not dwell, I think, on the possible consequences, which cannot but be tragic for blacks as well as for Jews, and for us all. . . .

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ
San Francisco *Chronicle*
San Francisco, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Two excellent recent articles, "Race Fever" by Edward Alexander [November 1990] and "The Question of Black Leadership" by Arch Puddington, have convinced me that the views of black leaders about whites, their excuses for the absence of black progress and, particularly, their explanations of black crime are illogical and self-destructive. These views are primarily the result of a Frankenstein-like nightmare which these leaders have themselves created in regard to black teenagers and young adults.

The Ocean-Hill Brownsville crisis of 1967-69 in New York City ushered in a long dormant black nationalism, a resurgence of latent anti-Semitism, a long-forgotten left-wing-inspired ideology of separation . . . and, worst of all, an unofficial but devastating licensing for the acting-out of adolescent rage which has wrought havoc upon both blacks and whites. A great outpouring of black euphoria and a brand new feeling of power (expressed openly as anti-white, separatist, and anti-Semitic sentiment) followed upon the Ocean-Hill Brownsville struggle and the winning of "community control" in the New York City public schools during the early 1970's. The expression of vehement anti-white sentiments on the part of adults was interpreted by black adolescents (particularly the most disadvantaged) as a signal that they no longer needed to listen to or comply with "whitey's" rules, standards, or justice.

This reaction was consistent with the psychology of American adolescents who often give vent to hostility and rage whenever there is an abrupt removal of limits. . . .

Anyone who knows anything about most American adolescents and young adults born since the end of World War II knows that the *last* thing this group needs is more encouragement to rebel. I served this age group as a New York City Youth Board street-gang worker after World War II, as the director of a residential-treatment institution, as a settlement-house supervisor, and in several other capacities, . . . and I can assure you that "adolescent rebellion" is for real, although academics and child-care professionals still argue over its etiology.

There was plenty of adolescent crime (as well as drugs) in the black community before 1970, but it was a source of great concern, condemnation, and even shame by leaders, ministers, and parents. At the very least, no one condoned it and few excused it even after acknowledging the role contributed by discrimination and prejudice to the problem.

Since the introduction of "community control" in the New York schools, black adolescent acting-out has spread like wildfire to inner cities and been exacerbated by the black leadership; white or black attempts at condemnation are labeled, respectively, "racism" or "Uncle Tomism." To make matters a thousand times worse, during these past ten years, a mass proliferation of "crack" cocaine (which causes grandiose paranoia and violent aggression) as well as the easy availability of numerous deadly weapons, have added to the power of this rebellious group. Ironically and pathetically, it is *still* the black communities which suffer most from the guns, drugs, and crime. . . .

Can anything be done? I am really not sure, but I am sure, as is Mr. Puddington, that unless the lying stops and unless the black leaders, ministers, academics, and, yes, the parents, condemn the Tawana Brawleys and the Central Park "wilders," things will get much worse. . . . As Mr. Puddington insists, the black leadership must, as in the past, uphold the role of moral arbiters. Whites must help but they are not to be bullied

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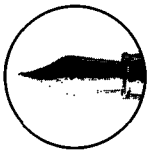

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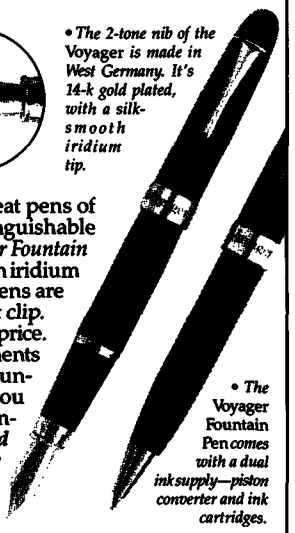

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or called "racists" should they express honest differences of opinion.

SHELDON SELLER
Riverton, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Arch Puddington makes some excellent points on the failure of black leadership, but things would have been clearer if he had addressed the question of "black leaders" rather than black leadership. The author fails to define adequately the term "black leader."

Mr. Puddington notes that some black leaders are quite responsible and others seem only to promote crime and racism. The problem is that television convinces the public that certain people are black leaders when in fact they are merely mouthpieces for the media. Perhaps those leaders should be called "TV black leaders." Real black leaders are leading fellow blacks in projects that take place in the real world, while the TV black leaders do nothing except appear on TV. They are there because they say the things TV reporters want them to say. If any one of them repudiated racism or nihilism we would not hear about it because he would not be on TV. . . .

We must not let the media convince us who black leaders are the way they convince us to buy detergent. Real black leaders oppose crime and racism. We should challenge the claim that one can support racially conscious programs and the release of criminals, and be a black leader.

JIM BRIGGS
Norwalk, Connecticut

ARCH PUDDINGTON writes:

I would like to thank those who wrote to COMMENTARY as well as those who contacted me privately for their generous words of encouragement.

Jim Briggs blames the media for exaggerating the significance of certain black militants. Perhaps he has a point, but I would caution against pressing it too far. An important theme of my article was the problem posed by the existence of a constituency within the inner city for a politics of racial anger. There is no way of knowing the size of this constituency. In New York, however, it is sufficiently large to provide a supportive audience not simply for Al Sharpton, but for a broad network of community activists, clergymen, newspapers and radio stations, and educators, all of whom blame white racism almost exclusively for the many ills afflicting black America. Nor is this phenomenon limited to New York. During Chicago's recent mayoral contest, the black candidate, Danny Davis, made campaign stops accompanied by a phalanx of bodyguards provided by Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam. One might well wonder why Davis, who does not subscribe to Farrakhan's racist ideology, would even indirectly associate himself with a man widely regarded as radical and anti-white. The answer, apparently, is that within Chicago's black community it is deemed good politics to have forged a relationship with Farrakhan and his followers. Put another way, for a black Chicago politician to repudiate Farrakhan openly would be political suicide in today's overheated racial atmosphere. Complaining that the media promote extremists and demagogues ignores the far more significant point that there are substantial numbers in the inner cities who support extremist, anti-white politics.

Let me add that while I understand the tone of despair which pervades much commentary on racial matters, I detect modest signs of change which give cause for hope. The horrible toll of black-on-black crime is, of course, a factor here, and one is more likely to hear community leaders talking openly of the perpetrators of violent crime as the enemy, rather than repeating the ritualistic attacks on white racism. Likewise, there is a growing recognition that blaming white society for black economic failure will not contribute to solving the problems of the inner-city poor. And there is a new interest in dealing with the crisis of young black males. On this issue, unfortunately, the news is both good and bad. On the one hand, there seems to be a willingness to identify honestly the causes of the failure of black males: the proliferation of female-headed households, the absence of male authority figures, an environment which equates diligent school work with a rejection of one's blackness, irresponsible attitudes toward women, a disdain for the world of work unless the payoff is big and immediate. Increasingly, however, the tone of the debate over how to address these problems is being dominated by black nationalists in the service of promoting their preferred project of the moment: Afrocentric education. According to its advocates, the purpose of Afrocentric education is to raise the black child's self-esteem through (although they would of course deny it) a process of racial indoctrination. But the ultimate goal of Afrocentric education is to inculcate in young blacks the notion that they should identify themselves primarily as Africans, and not as Americans. That high officials from some of America's largest public-school systems seem prepared to accept this bogus experiment is nothing less than scandalous.

Justice Brennan & the Court

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

While I agree with nearly everything that Wallace Mendelson writes in "Brennan's Revolution" [February], I do not think he is altogether justified in his criticism of *Baker* v. *Carr* [the case that established the principle of one-man, one-vote]. It seems to me that when state legislatures are very badly malapportioned (and reproduce that malapportionment in the United States House of Representatives), and when vested interests use this control to deny to others—whether minorities or majorities—access to the political process, then judicial intervention may be the only means of restoring legitimacy to that process. Mr. Mendelson attempts to deal with this objection as follows:

> Apologists contend that judicial intervention was justified in this instance because the political processes were helpless in the face of the excess power of those groups favored by the status quo. History refutes this contention. The victims of the English Rotten Borough system prevailed with nothing but political pressure.

England on the eve of the Reform Act of 1832 was—and is—widely believed to have been on the verge of civil war. Reform was supported by the bulk of the commercial and industrial middle classes, and repeatedly carried the House of Commons. It was repeatedly defeated in the Lords, which only abandoned its resistance when the King threatened to create new peers in sufficient numbers to reverse the vote. Without this "safety valve" in the unelected monarchy, it is difficult to see how "political pressure" in the ordinary sense would

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have worked. It seems to me that those who marched under the banner of white supremacy in the unreformed legislature of the post-Reconstruction South were at least as immune to ordinary political influence as Britain's House of Lords in 1832. *Baker* v. *Carr* belongs in the same perspective as the historic civil-rights cases, in contributing to the changes in the political process itself, that resulted in the civil-rights acts of the 60's.

HARRY V. JAFFA
Claremont, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Wallace Mendelson's "Brennan's Revolution" is political canard masquerading as scholarship. His thesis, that William J. Brennan, Jr. is the great judicial activist and that judicial activism is anathema to democracy, is unsophisticated and untenable. Mr. Mendelson asserts that the Constitution's "basic concern" is the structure of government, which implies that the Bill of Rights, the Constitution's first ten amendments, of which at least eight are plainly substantive, is somehow not basic. More fundamentally, there is nothing perfectly perspicuous even about the structure established by the Constitution's seven articles. *Marbury* v. *Madison*, which established the principle of judicial review of congressional enactments, is not clearly provided for in the text. The very structure of our government, then, is a product of "judicial activism." The point, which politicians can perhaps be excused for ignoring but which academicians surely should not, is that *all* interpretation is active, Chief Justice Marshall's, Justice Brennan's, Chief Justice Rehnquist's.

Mr. Mendelson commits more mundane errors as well. I will mention only two examples. First, he characterizes Justice Brennan's opinion in *Baker* v. *Carr* as the first great victory for Brennan's approach. Yet Mr. Mendelson obfuscates two important features of that opinion. First, Brennan's "radical" opinion was joined by five other Justices (with Justice Whittaker not participating), all but Justices Frankfurter and Harlan. Second, methodologically, the opinion in *Baker* v. *Carr* is identical to Chief Justice Marshall's opinion in *Marbury*: both reach a result based upon the political theory that (presumably) underlies the Constitution.

A second error occurs in Mr. Mendelson's discussion of the standing decisions. Standing is the legal concept that deals with the issue of who, if anyone, is permitted to trigger the judicial power. Mr. Mendelson's argument is that Brennan's position in the *Richardson* case—a case in which taxpayers charged that the congressional action of not publishing the CIA budget violated the Constitution—was another attempt to aggrandize judicial power at the expense of the representative branches. But this claim misapprehends the issue, which deals entirely with who, if anyone, should be permitted to sue. The consequence of the *Richardson* line of cases is that certain types of government action are immune from challenge. Thus, when, in 1976, the government transferred 77 acres of land with a value (not including fixtures) of well over half a million dollars to the Valley Forge Christian College, a group of citizens, known as the Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, challenged the action as violating the establishment clause. Their claim was that this transfer of land, no less than the establishment of school prayer or the governmental erection of crêches, breaches the wall of separation between church and state (a "wall," incidentally, that Justice Black said exists even though there is no such word in the Constitution). In the *Valley Forge* case, the Court, following *Richardson* and a similar case called *United States* v. *Schlesinger*, indicated that no one had standing to challenge this land transfer.

The issue here, which Mr. Mendelson seems not to understand, is not whether the government action did in fact violate the establishment clause, but simply whether it was even subject to constitutional attack. Brennan's answer to this latter question was in the affirmative. If no one can sue when the government acts, assertedly in violation of the Constitution, then the government is free to flout the rule of law.

Mr. Mendelson characterizes Brennan's position as a judicial power grab. I see it as nothing less than what is necessary to preserve our liberty and the rule of law.

DAVID R. DOW
University of Houston Law Center
Houston, Texas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Any successful incursion against Justice William J. Brennan, Jr.'s philosophy must be predicated on both historical and legal fact. Wallace Mendelson's article neglects both and accuses Justice Brennan of a tyranny . . . not proven by the writer.

Mr. Mendelson cites Justice Warren's opening in the *Miranda* decision as a defensive statement and would have the reader believe that the Court was breaking new ground. It was not. In *Mallory* v. *U.S.*, decided in 1957 in a decision written by Justice Frankfurter, the Court reversed the conviction of a defendant who had been held and interrogated many hours prior to his being taken before a magistrate for arraignment. Aside from the obvious violations of Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 5 (a), which required that arraignment take place without unnecessary delay, Justice Frankfurter said: "The awful instruments of the criminal law cannot be entrusted to a single functionary" (the police in this case). Arraigning a prisoner without undue delay was a part of "effective and intelligent law enforcement" (*Mallory*, supra). Justice Frankfurter ended his opinion reversing the conviction by saying: "Not until he had confessed, when any judicial caution had lost its purpose, did the police arraign him."

Contrary to Mr. Mendelson, . . . it was not a long step from *Mallory* to *Miranda*.

Moving on to *Gideon* and the right to counsel, Mr. Mendelson has missed the point entirely. He has failed to mention *Betts* v. *Brady*, decided in 1942; there the Supreme court affirmed its prior holdings that the right to counsel was (1) absolute in federal criminal proceedings, (2) not extended to the states by the Fourteenth Amendment, unless (3) there were special circumstances present. Additionally, the right to counsel for an indigent defendant was an integral part of many states' statutes, Indiana having made that decision as early as 1854. . . .

Betts and the "special-circumstances" rule subjected every state criminal prosecution to federal review to determine if special circumstances were, indeed, present, thus warranting the appointment of counsel. *Gideon*, argued by then private attorney Abe Fortas . . . , was based on (1) the right to coun-

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sel recognized in the statutes of the various and several states and the Constitution, and (2) preserving states' rights (Article X) by precluding almost automatic federal review of indigent cases on the state level. Rather, said the Court, appoint a lawyer in every indigent case and save us the trouble of poking our noses into your business.

Looking at the *Gideon* decision on this basis turns it around so that it fails the test Mr. Mendelson applies. It was a natural step from *Moore* v. *Michigan* (1957), which enlarged the special-circumstances rule (Brennan writing for a 5-4 majority).

Having apparently tailored judicial history to suit his premise, Mr. Mendelson approaches Justice Brennan from the "elitist" point of view. However, he again, unfortunately, misses a major proposition of the Common Law.

According to Mr. Mendelson, history indicates that we should have laws against abortion and we should also have capital punishment. But that reading of history ignores legal philosophy and history.

First, history changes: that is not a revisionist notion, but a practical fact of our society. Although the Continental Army was, in large part, supported by lotteries within the then various and several colonies, the crooked Louisiana Lottery of 1869 resulted in lotteries being declared illegal by the federal government and all of the state governments by 1876. Today, education and other good works are supported by any number of states by lotteries of the same ilk once denounced in the statehouse and in Washington.

Second, a law is not a law unless it is accepted and obeyed by the populace. Prohibition is probably the best example of this phenomenon. Therefore, "laws" against abortion which were regularly and callously disregarded and disobeyed were not, in the sense of the law, the law of the land. They were merely statutes that were avoided. Reformation of New York's restrictive divorce law in 1966 was spurred by, among other things, the fact that New Yorkers were being divorced in increasing numbers in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Nevada. . . .

It is easy to take issue with Justice Brennan on any number of things, and easier still when history is factored out of the argument. Spirited discussion on legal philosophies is great fun. But such a discussion can be meaningful only if there is complete candor among the participants.

MICHAEL COOK
New York City

WALLACE MENDELSON writes:

Harry V. Jaffa, a distinguished scholar, equates the Warren Court in *Baker* with an "unelected monarchy." Who am I to argue the point! Let us remember, however, that the American electoral reforms mentioned in my article were achieved without the help of a real, or an ersatz, monarchy. Surely what the monarch did in Britain to achieve reform, he did not by virtue of his "independence," but in response to political pressure and public opinion.

Consider, in contrast, the Warren Court's independence in the *Lucas* case (1964). In response to *Baker*, Colorado redesigned its legislature using Congress as its model (geographic representation in the Senate, population representation in the House). This scheme had been adopted by a majority of voters both statewide *and in every county*—including, of course, urban counties in which geographic representation is said to be unfair. The Warren Court held that the people of Colorado—no matter the 2-1 statewide vote—could not follow the "federal analogy." To borrow from Chief Justice Warren, "trees and acres" may not be represented in a state Senate though they are, indeed must be, in the federal Senate. If that seems arbitrary, consider this: had Justice Clark not taken so long to make up his mind in *Baker*, that case probably would have been decided on its merits at a time when all Justices took geographic senates for granted.

Mr. Jaffa says *Baker* "belongs in the same perspective as the historic civil-rights cases." If he would examine especially the legislature of his own state, he would find that the seductive slogan, one-man, one-vote, goes hand in glove with gross, partisan gerrymandering. A generation after *Baker* the Court has still not intervened—apparently because the problem is so intractable. The states then may gerrymander unmercifully, but they cannot have geographic senates.

Poor John Marshall! David R. Dow holds him responsible for all of what a later Chief Justice called the Supreme Court's "self-inflicted wounds."

The Bill of Rights, I suggest, does not disprove, but rather supports, my view that "the Constitution's basic concern is the structure and process of government." The First Amendment's speech, press, assembly, and petition clauses, for example, sustain the *processes* of democracy. Its religion clauses, along with the Third Amendment's quartering-of-troops provision, are *structural* in the federalist sense that they proscribe national, in favor (via the Tenth Amendment) of state authority.

All of the numerous provisions of the Fourth through the Eighth Amendments deal with pre-trial and trial *process* problems. The Ninth and Tenth entail a *structural* allocation of rights and powers. Thus, of about 30 provisions in the first ten amendments only one—the Second Amendment right-to-bear-arms—bespeaks a non-structural, non-procedural value. That relic (now deemed by many an anachronism) reveals, by contrast, the Founders' wisdom in concentrating so heavily on the *means* by which each subsequent generation could make its own value choices.

Mr. Dow finds me wrong on *Baker*; this he "proves" by showing that the decision was supported by a majority of the Justices. By that standard, he is wrong on *Richardson, Schlesinger,* and *Valley Forge*—the score, then, is three-to-one in my favor. My answer to Mr. Dow's criticism of these decisions (and his related comments on John Marshall) will be found in Justice Powell's words quoted at length in my article. To find in them a threat to "our liberty and the rule of law" is to pit one's heart against Justice Powell's brain. That is not in my view a promising venture for anyone.

Michael Cook chides me for not discussing *Mallory, Gideon,* and *Betts* in relation to *Miranda.* I did not mention them for the same reason, I suppose, that Chief Justice Warren did not mention them: they are not relevant. Justices Harlan *et al.* put it more broadly: "Nothing in the . . . Constitution or in the precedents squares with the [Court's decision in *Miranda*]."

Obviously I did not say, as Mr. Cook charges, "that we should have laws against abortion and we should also have capital punishment."

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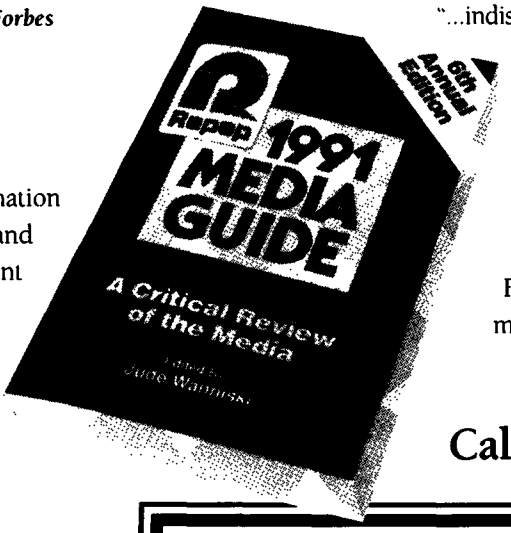

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Genocide

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his broad-ranging review of Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn's *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies* [Books in Review, January], Steven T. Katz raises many important questions about the meaning of genocide and the comparability of the Holocaust. In passing, he also takes issue with my own treatment of the Armenian genocide. His complex argument cannot be adequately addressed in a short letter to the editor, but I wish to make three points: (1) Mr. Katz's implied definition of genocide is so narrow that it excludes all other instances of genocide except for the Holocaust; (2) this allows him tautologically to argue that other instances of mass murder like the Armenian genocide were not truly genocide; (3) he does not seem to grasp why other scholars may wish to work with a definition of genocide somewhat broader than his in order to compare the Holocaust to other instances.

A word about the Armenian genocide is in order here. During World War I the "Young Turks" (also known as the Committee of Union and Progress) who headed the Ottoman empire sought to destroy the Armenian minority in order to create a nationally homogeneous Turkey. They claimed that the Armenians had sided with the Russians in the war, and deported the entire Armenian population from the eastern provinces of Turkey toward Syria. Under cover of these deportations, they proceeded to murder and starve the Armenians, until out of a population of some two million before the war, nearly 600,000 had died by 1916, and approximately one million had perished by 1918. It will be recalled that after the war, the Ottomans rallied once again. During the fight to establish a Turkish republic, there were more massacres of minorities, including the Armenians. Thus, between 1914 when World War I commenced and 1923 when the Turkish republic was founded, it is estimated that between one million and one-and-one-half million Armenians perished. This suggests that approximately the same proportion of Armenians perished in the Ottoman empire as did Jews in Europe during the Final Solution, if one takes the upper figure as valid.

Scholars of the Ottoman empire point out that the census statistics of the Armenian Patriarchate as well as of the Ottoman authorities are far from reliable. What some authors like Toynbee and Hovannisian have done is to pool and average Patriarchate and Ottoman statistics. Some of my own estimates are based on just such figures. How Mr. Katz arrived at half a million for the total of those who perished in the Armenian genocide I do not know. . . .

But for the sake of the argument, let us grant Mr. Katz his low estimate: does half a million murdered out of a population of some two million not add up to genocide? Apparently not, because Mr. Katz insists on very stringent criteria for what qualifies and what does not qualify as genocide.

Mr. Katz begins his review by selectively quoting with approval from Raphael Lemkin, the distinguished jurist who first coined the term "genocide." In that definition Lemkin seems to mean that genocide is synonymous with a policy of group annihilation, and anything short of such a policy is not genocide. . . .

Equipped with this definition, . . . Mr. Katz discovers, not surprisingly, that only the Holocaust qualifies as genocide, and that even the Armenian genocide does not. He ends his essay with an almost plaintive question: why is it that Chalk and Jonassohn, as well as other scholars, insist on broadening the definition of genocide? "What is gained?" he asks. Indeed, he suggests that this may be done out of a misplaced sense of sympathy or a soft-headed lack of precision. It seems to me that Mr. Katz confuses the narrowness of a definition with its intellectual rigor. The two are not the same. Indeed, Lemkin himself opted for a broader meaning of the term "genocide" than Mr. Katz allows. . . .

A more widely accepted definition was formulated by the United Nations in its Genocide Convention of 1948:

> Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group as such. . . .

The crucial terms here are "destroy" and "in whole or in part." By "destroy" the UN meant acts that included killing and acts that fell short of killing such as interfering with the biological perpetuation of the group. And by "in part and in whole" it implied that mass murder on a vast scale, even where it fell short of annihilation, qualified as genocide.

There can be no doubt that both Lemkin and the drafters of the UN Convention (were they not subjected to political pressures) would have viewed the Armenian genocide as an instance of genocide, even if the proportion of victims was smaller than that of the Final Solution. . . .

Presumably jurists like Lemkin and the drafters of the UN Convention formulated a broader definition of genocide because they wished to condemn and punish all perpetrators of mass murders on a vast scale, not only those like the Nazis who wished to annihilate a whole people. Some historians and social scientists, and I place myself among them, believe that in order to understand an event like the Holocaust, we need to compare it to similar instances like the Armenian genocide, the "auto-genocide" in Cambodia, and even the destruction of the kulaks. We do not claim that these cases are equivalent. There certainly are crucial differences, and the Holocaust is indeed unique in many significant ways. But a comparison of various cases—made possible by a broader definition of genocide than annihilation—permits us to look for common elements as well as differences. It is our hope that the search for such common elements may shed some light on the causes of genocide, including the Holocaust itself.

ROBERT MELSON
Purdue University
West Lafayette, Indiana

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Steven T. Katz's review may serve to mislead readers who are not familiar with Mr. Katz's concealed assumptions, causing them to overlook the value of Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn's singular work.

Firstly, Mr. Katz implies that classification of a case as an instance of genocide depends on the perpetrator's attempt (or achieved aim) to kill all members of the group; this is not a criterion either in the definitions of genocide of Messrs. Chalk and Jonassohn, Raphael Lemkin, the UN Genocide Convention, or my own (which differs from that of Chalk and Jonassohn). Thus, Mr. Katz tells us blithely that Melos was not a gen-

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ocide because "*only* 'the men of military age were put to death' " (was that *only* 33 percent or 40 percent of the population perhaps?); only 25-33 percent of the kulaks were killed; only 20 percent of the Ukrainians; and under 50 percent of the Armenians (for the latter he uses dubious demography—not cited—which masks Turkish denials of their murders).

Second, Mr. Katz consistently confuses intent with motive: one may intend to destroy a group from many motives (this is explicit in the Chalk and Jonassohn typology) but the motive of the perpetrator is not a necessary element in either a legal or a sociological definition.

Thus, the man-made Ukrainian famine of 1932-33 is not a genocide—according to Mr. Katz—because although it "would eventually consume millions of Ukrainian lives," the object was "the complete annihilation of Ukrainian nationalism—much like Hitler's strategy, in, for example, Poland (and elsewhere in Eastern Europe)." Has Mr. Katz forgotten that Lemkin used the latter as an example of genocide? Lemkin noted that Hitler divided occupied peoples into (1) people who should be destroyed immediately and completely; (2) people destroyed directly and indirectly over a period of time (such as the Poles); and (3) groups of related blood who might be Germanized. . . . Both people in categories (1) and (2)—Jews and Poles—were considered victims of genocide by Lemkin.

Third, Mr. Katz's method of comparison is primitive, using the attributes of the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" as necessary criteria. Although Mr. Katz tells us that transcending "moralizing and ethnic parochialism" is a desirable goal, he has not transcended ethnic parochialism but expanded its borders by misusing the Final Solution as the paradigm of genocide. Most scholars of genocide agree that the Final Solution is not a paradigm: although there are common preconditions for genocide, the Final Solution is viewed as singular (for different reasons) by many, resembling other ideological genocides, like that of the Armenians, better than other cases. Mr. Katz then reifies the motive behind this annihilation as the necessary condition for establishing the intent of genocide, glossing over the distinction between intent and motive.

Fourth, Mr. Katz relies on discrediting arguments by advancing simple monocausal explanations and shooting them down like straw men. His reduction of Chalk and Jonassohn's nuanced explanation of the complexity of causes behind the demise of Native Americans in the 19th century is a case in point. Further, susceptibility to "blind epidemic disease" is often related to hunger and malnutrition caused by regime policies or their implementation, both in the Warsaw ghetto and on the American plains—which is not to equate these situations. As Isaiah Trunk noted in his book *Judenrat*:

> One may reasonably infer that even had the Germans not "resettled" the Jews from the ghettos for the purpose of mass killing, they would in any case have died at a "slow" death rate in five or six years.

And that, too, would have been genocide.

In brief, Mr. Katz, for all his learned acumen, has misused and misunderstood the comparative method to make an unassailable case: no other genocide exists but the Holocaust because it is the prototype—its characteristics are the checklist of necessary attributes for categorizing collective murders as genocide. According to Mr. Katz, the Armenians, Cambodians, Ukrainians, and Native Americans must devise another concept for their cases.

HELEN FEIN
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his review of our book, *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies* Steven T. Katz writes that our definition of genocide is "a very good" one, but argues that our choice of cases "betrays the promise" of that definition. "A real contribution" to the study of genocide, he concludes, must be based on "[p]recision, learning, and the ability to make crucial distinctions." That is a fair enough principle. Let us measure Mr. Katz's review by his own standard.

Mr. Katz begins his critique with

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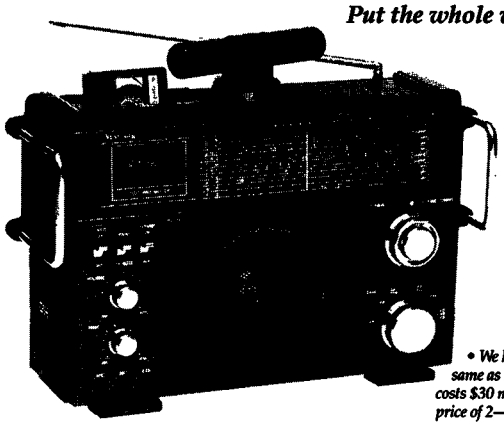

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an examination of what he claims are "a number of *their* cases," . . . (our emphasis). He then proceeds to examine a case which is nowhere mentioned in our book—the Assyrian conquest of Palestine between 734-33 B.C.E. and 701 B.C.E.—and presents it as if we had been guilty of misinterpreting it. In *his* case, Mr. Katz argues that the conquerors pursued a policy of massive deportation rather than total murder. But we agree with this conclusion and he has every reason to know that we agree with it. In our book, quoting E. Ebeling and B. Meissner's *Reallexicon der Assyriologie* (1928), we point out "that during the time of the Assyrians whole peoples were driven out of their homelands and resettled in another territory."

Mr. Katz ignores the fact that throughout our discussion of antiquity we underline the difficulty of interpreting the surviving evidence, not only about Assyria, but about many ancient states. We acknowledge, for example, the contention of H.W.F. Saggs and other scholars who believe that Assyrian savagery has been vastly exaggerated. We also emphasize that "The evidence for genocide in antiquity is circumstantial, inferential, and ambiguous, and it comes to us exclusively from the perpetrators." Yet there are good reasons to believe that genocide was practiced in the ancient world. We conclude that:

> genocide was a relatively common event, for the following reasons: (1) whole empires and peoples have disappeared, and it seems very unlikely that all of them could have disappeared in a short time solely through enslavement and/or assimilation; (2) the reports of extreme cruelty (judged by modern standards) and of extermination are common enough to suggest that such events were not considered to be extraordinary; [and] (3) the religions of most societies in antiquity, as different as they were in other respects, commanded their adherents to exterminate certain groups of nonbelievers or enemies; . . . .

Mr. Katz simply ignores these points in his review.

Mr. Katz compounds his distortion of our arguments with sloppy factual errors and misleading presentations of our arguments. While attacking our analysis of the Athenian destruction of the Melians, he mistakes 478 B.C.E. for 416 B.C.E. and then attributes the error to us by writing: "They refer to the destruction of Melos by Athens in 478 B.C.E." He falsifies the history of the Albigensian Crusade by claiming that the massacre at Bézier was an exception and that the people of Montségur "were given a chance to abjure," implying that it was their own fault that they were massacred. This is followed by a diatribe against our discussion of the roots of the Inquisition in the Albigensian Crusade, which in actual fact we deal with in a single sentence arguing that "The difficulties encountered in the suppression of this heresy contributed significantly to the establishment and power of the Inquisition."

He then tackles our inclusion of the Great Witch-Hunt and even quotes our statement to the effect that we do not consider it a genocide, but this does not deter him from devoting several paragraphs to the argument that it was not a genocide because it killed only a very small proportion of women ("the number of 'witches' killed as a percentage of all women in Europe was . . . less than 1/32 of 1 percent . . ."). To our assertion that the Great Witch-Hunt is a precursor of the many 20th-century cases of ideologically-motivated killing, he replies that "this is to get things largely backward." If this means anything at all, is he asking us to believe that the 20th-century killings were the precursors of the Great Witch-Hunt?

Mr. Katz completely distorts our treatment of Native Americans, charging that we "employ unsubstantiated and unlikely charges of 'germ warfare.'" In fact, we point out that despite charges of germ warfare by other scholars, we know of only one well-documented case, that of the British officers stationed at Fort Pitt who "gave the Delaware Indians a handkerchief and two blankets from the local smallpox hospital in a desperate effort to halt Pontiac's Revolt." Indeed, we offer a more conservative interpretation of the germ-warfare issue than did Mr. Katz in an earlier article in *Modern Judaism* in which he alleged without qualification "abuses of the most sordid kind, for example, passing on to Indians diseased cholera and smallpox blankets which the Indians were known to have no immunity to, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths. . . ."

Mr. Katz says that our discussion of the Holocaust deserves "a mixed grade," but he neither summarizes our argument nor points to specific faults in it. This is strange. One would expect a scholar who believes in the uniqueness of the Holocaust to zero in on our treatment of that vital event in his review. Can it be that Mr. Katz finds it awkward to acknowledge that his analysis of the Holocaust actually parallels our own? In our essay, "The Ultimate Ideological Genocide," we write: "The Holocaust was unique among genocides in several vital respects that must be recognized" including: (1) "Hitler's definition of the Jews as members of a subhuman race and his insistence that they be annihilated immediately and totally in order to save Germany and the Aryan race from racial pollution and death"; (2) that the roots of the Holocaust were in Germany, "one of the most scientifically and industrially advanced countries in Europe"; and (3) the modern bureaucratic organization of the Holocaust. We emphasize that "no people in history had ever been attacked by such an array of scientific, industrial, and administrative weapons in a program specifically designed to ensure its complete and immediate biological destruction." We conclude:

> We strongly believe that the Holocaust is part of a larger category of genocides and that it must be compared with earlier cases of mass killing before its origins, its significance, and the measures needed to prevent its recurrence can be understood. Indeed, only by comparing the Holocaust with other cases of genocide can one fully grasp the fact that the Holocaust was the most carefully conceived, the most efficiently implemented, and the most fully realized case of ideologically motivated genocide in the history of the human race and that it represents a type of genocide that is characteristic of aberrant quests for a "perfected" society in our time.

By omitting any mention of these conclusions, Mr. Katz distorts our argument so that we appear to have neglected key elements of the uniqueness of the Holocaust within the history of genocide.

We set out to write a thoughtful, nuanced book on the history and sociology of genocide. We took pains to underline gaps in the evidence, to point out alternative in-

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terpretations, and to avoid oversimplifications. Mr. Katz has reviewed a book that we do not recognize. He has ignored our caveats, distorted our arguments, and twisted facts to support his thesis that the Holocaust was the only genocide in history. This is a strange analytical technique for a scholar who believes that a "a real contribution" to the study of genocide must be based on precision, learning, and the ability to make crucial distinctions. . . .

FRANK CHALK
KURT JONASSOHN
Departments of History and Sociology
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec

STEVEN T. KATZ writes:

Robert Melson objects to my "stringent criteria" for the employment of the term "genocide." He is in error here for one reason: the definition I work with in my review is that of Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, not my own. What I wanted to show was that most of the cases they include in their anthology do not fit their own definition. It was this inconsistency that was at the heart of my analysis. Mr. Melson is correct that Raphael Lemkin and the UN definition would differ from my definition of genocide were I to propose one—something I did not do in my review—but in that case I think I could show very easily that both Lemkin's and the UN's definitions are unusable because they turn out to be so vague as to be irrelevant. For example, in the UN definition, how large a "part" of a population has to be killed for an event to qualify as genocide? The UN definition fails to answer this question, and thus any act of murder—even of one person—i.e., constituting some fraction of 1 percent of a population—could theoretically still be classified under the UN definition as "genocide."

Mr. Melson replies to my request for precision by arguing that the broader definition he favors will allow us "to condemn and punish all perpetrators of mass murders on a vast scale"—but surely this is a non sequitur. We do not need a new category of genocide in order "to punish all perpetrators of mass murders on a vast scale." The legal and moral category of murder will suffice for this. Although I too believe in comparing the Holocaust to other mass tragedies, comparison should allow for difference as well as similarity. It may well be, *contra* Mr. Melson's assertion, that it is the respect for difference that will shed "light on the causes of genocide, including the Holocaust itself." The alternative position may obscure rather than illuminate because its reductionism destroys the very particularity of the historical event under analysis.

Finally, as to the statistics of the Armenian tragedy—both Mr. Melson and I recognize that the issue is too complex to discuss in this forum. Let me say, however, that I have tried to be absolutely scrupulous in my demographic calculations (which will be described in detail in Volume 2 of my own forthcoming study of these matters to be published by Oxford University Press).

Helen Fein's letter is simply confused or in error on every point. Messrs. Chalk and Jonassohn's definition does entail the "attempt . . . to kill all members of the group [in question]." The use of the term *only* when used by me is not a moral term; it is a statistical one relative to the concept of complete annihilation as the purpose of genocide. As for her accusations regarding my "dubious" demographic calculations of the Armenian massacre, those calculations are wholly unrelated to "Turkish denials of [Armenian] murders." Her accusation is, in fact, offensive both intellectually and morally. I explicitly wrote:

> [My] disinclination to label the event as genocide does not entail any diminution of the moral enormity of the crime, or any endorsement of the efforts of Turkish authorities, and certain Turkish scholars, to downplay what occurred.

I would also remind Helen Fein that I was reviewing Messrs. Chalk and Jonassohn, not Raphael Lemkin, who wrote in 1942 (published in 1943), and who was, in fact, wrong about many things, including the comparison of the fate of Jews and Poles under Nazism. We, writing in 1991, are not bound by Lemkin's errors of 1942—except, it seems, if we are Helen Fein.

Yes, I do use the Holocaust as *a*—not *the*—paradigm of genocide, but my critique of Messrs. Chalk and Jonassohn, as already noted, is based on their criterion, not my own. Having criticized me (incorrectly) for using the Holocaust as the paradigm, Helen Fein does exactly the same thing in making her erroneous argument about my discussion of the Native Americans. She fails to understand that the vast depopulation of Native Americans took place in the 16th century, *not* the 19th century, and was due to disease at a time when no one understood the "germ" nature of disease in contrast to what occurred in the ghettos of the 1940's. Though there is no question that disease was abetted by overwork and malnutrition, even without these factors the despoliation of the Native Americans in the 16th century would have been massive, and probably in excess of 90 percent of the indigenous population. It is this fact which makes Fein's (and Chalk and Jonassohn's) explanation incorrect. Her philosophically and historically uninformed criticism—falling into the same category of imprecision and confusion as the work she seeks to defend—will not advance the discussion.

Now to Messrs. Chalk and Jonassohn's reply. First, my analysis of their treatment of the classical evidence was necessarily compressed for a review. Let me therefore now fill in a bit more detail.

Messrs. Chalk and Jonassohn, while recognizing the confusion presented by the evidence, still feel able to conclude that genocide was "a relatively common event" in the ancient world. They use the Assyrians as their main evidence for this. My countervailing argument, drawn from the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (which they do not discuss in their book), was intended to show that national conquest does not equal genocide, as their reconstruction suggests. Here I may further note, with regard to their three premises for their conclusion, that (1) the disappearance of empires and peoples is not proof of genocide. In the last hundred years many empires and peoples have disappeared, e.g., the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires, and today the Soviet, but none of this entailed genocide. (2) "Reports of extreme cruelty and extermination," whatever that actually meant in ancient records, are not equivalents of genocide technically defined. (3) The religious "data" are wholly uncertain, as is made clear by the biblical evidence. Moses, for example, is told to destroy Amalek but there is no record that he actually did so; the pronouncements of religious texts are

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not literal history. As to Melos and the Albigensians, aside from the typo regarding the date of the Melian event, for which I apologize, Messrs. Chalk and Jonassohn provide not a single fact to contradict my judgment that neither was an instance of genocide as they define it. Moreover, their obvious unfamiliarity with the events of the Albigensian Crusade makes their denials merely rhetorical.

Moving on to their other medieval "cases," I note that contrary to their claims to have been misrepresented, they include in their book a reading from Ruthven that centers on the Inquisition, thereby indicating their incompetence in these complex areas of scholarship. The same is true regarding their appalling treatment of the witch craze. They defend the inclusion of this phenomenon in a book supposedly devoted to genocide on the grounds that, though not a case of genocide, "it is a precursor of the many 20th-century cases of ideologically motivated killing." As I argued in my original review, this is absurd. When I referred to their presentation as "getting things backward," I meant that Messrs. Chalk and Jonassohn see the witch craze as setting the precedent for modern mass murder, when, in fact, it was a medieval crime that is to be distinguished from modern crimes by its *limits*—a basic point I made explicitly and one that Messrs. Chalk and Jonassohn fail to reply to at all, though it is the key issue here.

Their citation of my comments on the destruction of Native Americans in a 1981 essay is dishonest for two reasons. First, my views have changed radically since 1981, as Messrs. Chalk and Jonassohn know, having heard my paper at the 1988 Oxford Holocaust Conference, "Remembering for the Future" (reprinted in Vol. 3 of the Conference Proceedings, pp. 200-216). Second, they once again avoid the main issue at stake, grasping for marginal straws instead.

To my comment on their treatment of the Holocaust "as deserving a mixed grade," they reply that I did not "point to specific faults in it." This is true and was due to space limitations. (It is nonetheless curious that they spend about a third of their letter discussing the Holocaust which I did not analyze at length and skip over all the cases I criticized in detail!) Therefore, let me say explicitly that to the degree that they concur with my analysis of the Holocaust they are on secure ground. But I still would give a "mixed grade" to their treatment because their summary, as they now acknowledge, is secondhand and unoriginal, and even then does not fully assimilate what it has taken from others. Also, though most of the secondary readings they reproduce are taken from distinguished scholars, the one by Gabrielle Tyrnauer on the Gypsies is terrible. Hence my "mixed grade."

I note in closing that Messrs. Chalk and Jonassohn have nothing at all to say in response to my critique of their poor work on such central events included in their anthology as the destruction of the Armenians, the gulag, and Cambodia.

Ben Hecht

To the Editor of Commentary:

In his article on Ben Hecht, "The Great Hack Genius" [December 1990], Joseph Epstein fails to mention Ben Hecht's *A Guide for the Bedevilled*. I am completely mystified by this strange omission.

Not a *literary* masterpiece, this well-written volume published by Scribner's in 1944 is nevertheless absolutely essential for any evaluation of Ben Hecht's life and ideas about Hollywood, the Jewish people, the Germans, and the phenomenon of anti-Semitism. . . .

Hecht, in one of numerous anecdotes, tells the tragic story of Dr. Philip Semmelweis [circa 1850], who is forced to commit suicide in order to prove the existence of something on the hands of physicians (deadly bacteria—yet to be discovered) that was killing the mothers of new-born babies in the "best" hospitals of Vienna. Dr. Semmelweis had been denounced as a lunatic for insisting on doctors washing their hands, particularly after they dissected corpses, before delivering babies.

What is the relationship of the Semmelweis story to the Jews? "Here is the relationship," Hecht says. "If a world would not save mothers, imagine its incalculable indifference to saving Jews. It is in the world of these indifferent ones that anti-Semitism flourishes. . . ."

A Guide for the Bedevilled is replete with prophetic statements and analyses that have unfortunately come true. Practically every page has something important and powerful to say. . . .

There are still bedevilled people in this world who can learn much from Hecht's writings of 1944, and I recommend that everyone read or reread *A Guide for the Bedevilled* very carefully and slowly. . . . In the end, Ben Hecht stood up for the integrity, the well-being, and the honor of the Jewish people. . . .

Irving Gavrin
Bedminster, New Jersey

To the Editor of Commentary:

Ben Hecht was a boyhood hero of mine because of a short story he wrote which has remained in my memory for 57 years. Our standard high-school literature textbook in Clayton, Missouri contained Hecht's short story, "Class Will Tell," which contrasted the behavior of a British nobleman and a young newspaper boy. In a crisis the newspaper boy performs nobly, the nobleman badly. Why? Because the newspaper boy is descended from King David, but the nobleman springs from a lineage much less distinguished.

I always thought of Ben Hecht as a proud Jew, as he proved to be. Believe me, he knew how to tell a story.

Alvin M. Extein
Chesterfield, Missouri

To the Editor of Commentary:

Toward the end of . . . his article on Ben Hecht, Joseph Epstein writes: "Although so far as is known Hecht saved no European Jews through his work with the Irgun. . . ."

Ben Hecht, if he were alive, would probably not bother to respond. But he was not alone in that rescue work, and this defamatory assertion does injury to those of us who supported the Irgun who are still here, including Will Rogers, Jr., Paul O'Dwyer, Stella Adler, Maurice Rosenblatt, and Peter Bergson, among others.

It would not have taken much effort to establish the truth—that our efforts did save thousands of Hitler's victims. In 1940, Josiah Wedgwood told the House of Commons (based on British intelligence reports) that the Irgun had already brought to Palestine through the British blockade 11,500 refugees (as against half that number carried by "kosher" Zionist workers under the "selectivity" principle). Add to those 11,500 the 2,200 on the *Sakarya*, 650 on the *Ben Hecht* (!), and 900 on the *Altalena*, as well as hundreds more that did not make the press, and what happens to Mr. Epstein's "so far as is known"? . . .

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Still determined to lambaste Hecht for his support of "the Irgun line," Mr. Epstein takes up *Perfidy*, a book Hecht published in 1961:

> Passionate, but not particularly well informed, Hecht's book about the postwar trial of Rudolf Kastner, the man who on behalf of the Jewish Agency negotiated with Adolf Eichmann for the lives of Hungarian Jews, shows both his strengths and weaknesses as a writer. No need to rehearse the intricate details of the Kastner trial here, but suffice it to say that Ben Hecht, in 1961, used his book on the trial to reassert the Irgun line.

It may suffice for Mr. Epstein; it does not suffice for truth or history. . . .

Perfidy, based on the transcript and filings in the case, is the story of the trial of an old Hungarian Jew named Malchiel Greenwald, who managed to evade the death-camp trains and make it to Palestine despite Kastner's "negotiations." Recognizing Kastner in Jerusalem, Greenwald wrote and disseminated an accusation that Kastner, as a Zionist leader in Budapest, had betrayed Hungarian Jews to obtain safe-conduct for his family and friends. Kastner was at that time an official of the Israel Department of Trade and Industry, and the government indicted Greenwald on a charge of criminal libel. In the trial, Kastner was merely a witness.

The manuscript of *Perfidy* was edited by Shmuel Tamir, Greenwald's counsel and later Israel's Minister of Justice. He provided the documents and checked the facts in the book; no one could edit Hecht's prose. The trial judge, Benjamin Halevy, could never by the slightest breath of suspicion be linked to the Irgun. After weeks of a soul-searching trial, he took nine months to write the verdict. It exonerated Greenwald, and castigated Kastner. On one account he could not clear Greenwald: an "unproven" charge that Kastner had gotten money from the Nazis. For this, Greenwald was fined one Israeli pound—but he was awarded 200 pounds in court costs. (On appeal, a divided Supreme Court reversed on the ground that Greenwald had not proven Kastner guilty beyond a reasonable doubt—a reversal of our jurisprudence.) Public opinion apparently had no doubt. Another survivor of the negotiations shot Kastner dead on the street. . . .

HARRY LOUIS SELDEN
Chevy Chase, Maryland

The Temple Mount

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The large volume of letters in your April issue in response to David Bar-Illan's article, "*60 Minutes* and the Temple Mount" [February], shows how much the slanted reporting by *60 Minutes* has outraged objective observers.

In early October I obtained an amateur video made by a worshipper on that fateful day during Sukkot. For about 20 minutes the video shows a rain of stones and boulders flying over the Wall onto the plaza reserved for worshippers. Meanwhile, the police are assembled at the foot of the ramp leading up to the upper Temple Mount. Only at the very end of the film are the police seen charging through the gate leading to the upper area. Any reversal of this sequence is, of course, pure fabrication and would have required serious splicing of film. . . .

MANFRED R. LEHMANN
Miami Beach, Florida

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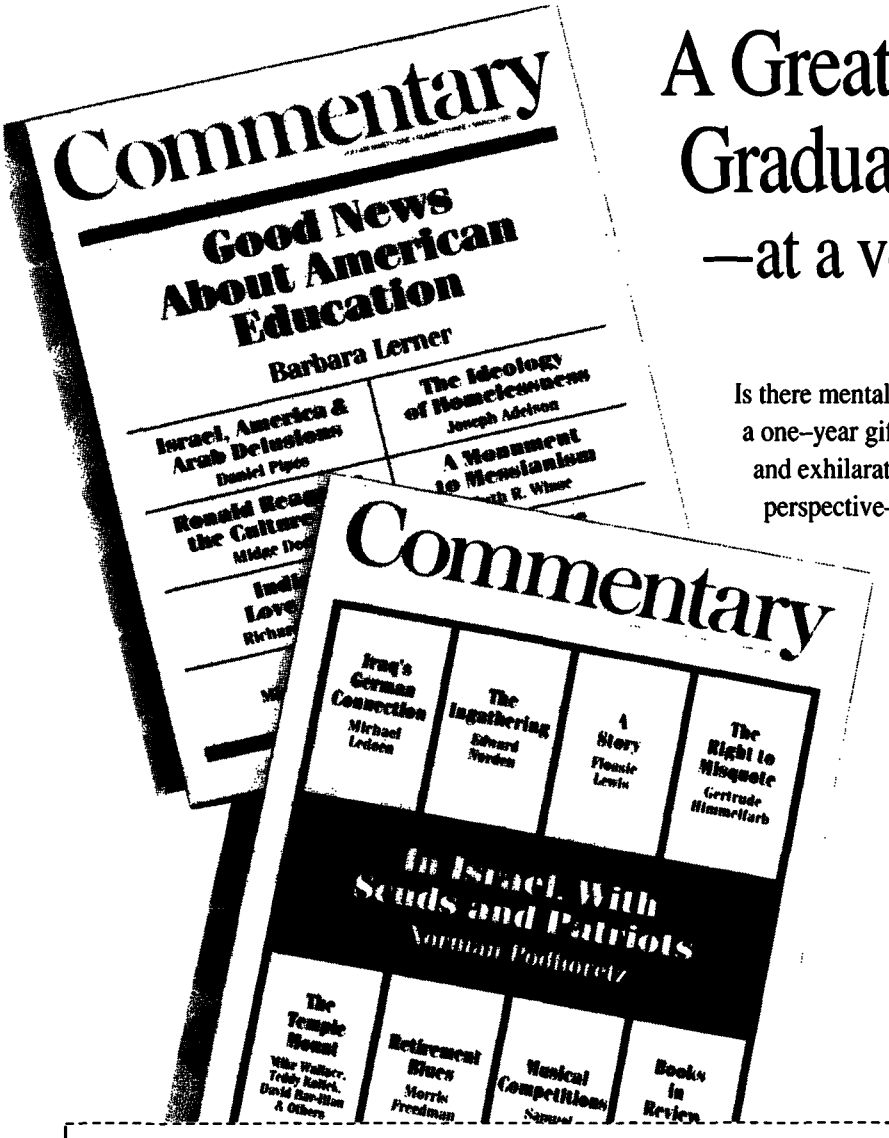

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Iraq: The Mystery of American Policy

Elie Kedourie

World War II, many historians have argued, was an unnecessary war. It was the consequence, so the argument goes, of short-sighted and pusillanimous policies followed, for different reasons, by the leaders of the two Great Powers of Europe who alone had the power to stop Hitler in his tracks. They did not do so because, in the final analysis, their nerve failed, because the specter of another world war, following the slaughter of 1914-18, was simply too horrible to contemplate. In the end, however, the policies of 1936-38, driven by these fears, made inexorable the very outcome which had been most dreaded.

Whatever the cogency of these arguments, it still remains true that Germany was a first-class military and industrial power, and the policies of its rivals and opponents, however well-conceived and executed, might not have dissuaded a regime hell-bent on expansion by aggression from pursuing adventurous courses.

If there is something to the argument that the 1939 war was unnecessary, then it has to be said that the Gulf War of 1991 was doubly unnecessary. Doubly so because, unlike Germany, Iraq is far from being a first-class industrial and military power. The armaments it was able to accumulate were mainly purchased abroad, or manufactured locally with foreign help. The enormous military establishment it developed and sustained was paid for not out of the productivity of the Iraqi economy, but from the ransom exacted by oil-bearing countries following the OPEC coups of 1973 and 1979. The enormous sums garnered by Iraq from the sale of oil at exorbitant prices were disposed of at their unfettered pleasure by the handful of Ba'thist conspirators who had hijacked the Iraqi state in 1968, and who by thuggish methods continued to keep it under their absolute control.

It follows, hence, that responsibility for the crisis which erupted with the invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990 lies that much more heavily on the policies which various powers chose to follow vis-à-vis Iraq: Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, which spent very large sums to enable Saddam Hussein to continue the war against Iran which he had begun in 1980; France, and to a lesser extent other arms exporters, which as early as the mid-1970's blithely, indeed furiously, exchanged the latest military aircraft, tanks, torpedo boats, and missiles for (recycled) petrodollars; the Soviet Union, which, even earlier, concluded a treaty of friendship with the new regime, and also supplied it with quantities of weapons, even though, when the crunch came, they proved a broken reed; and, above all, the United States, which came to be the predominant power in the area and which, possibly as early as 1980, during the dying days of the Carter administration, began its "tilt" toward Saddam Hussein—a tilt which leaned so far toward him that it ended by looking uncommonly like an embrace.

The justification for this tilt was, of course, Khomeini's "fundamentalist" regime in Iran. The regime was very unfriendly toward the U.S. and, in holding U.S. diplomats hostage for more than a year, showed itself contemptuous of civilized usages and given to barbarous habits. This justifiably aroused feelings of resentment and hostility toward the Islamic Republic of Iran. What, however, created great concern was the fear that the fundamentalism which Khomeini preached would create an irresistible wave which could overwhelm the region, destroy friendly regimes, and ruin American interests.

The sequel showed that this panic had little basis to it. Lebanon excepted, Khomeinism outside Iran was everywhere a failure. That it flourished among the Lebanese Shiites is explained by the Lebanese civil war, which had been raging since 1975 and which had seriously destabilized and shaken from its moorings a hitherto traditional community, as well as by the complicity of Syria, which provided bases from which Iranian Revolutionary Guards could organize, train, and control armed groups of Shiites, in the illusory hope that out of the Lebanese turmoil would arise an Islamic Republic of Lebanon.

Elie Kedourie, professor emeritus of politics at the University of London and a Fellow of the British Academy, is currently Olin Visiting Professor at Columbia University. His books include *Islam in the Modern World, England in the Middle East,* and *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle Eastern Studies.*

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Elsewhere—in Iraq where Shiites are a majority; in Bahrain where they are also a majority; in Kuwait where they form an important group in the population; in Saudi Arabia where they predominate in the Eastern oil-bearing provinces—there proved to be little prospect of Khomeini-style regimes establishing themselves. Nor is this hindsight. In the first place, Iran did not—does not—have the capacity or the resources to control, let alone rule, unfamiliar Arabic-speaking populations, even though those happen to be Shiites. For in the second place, the Shiites of Iraq or other Arab countries have little familiarity or affinity with Iranian Shiites.

Thus, even if Iran had won the war triggered in 1980 by Saddam's seizure of a piece of its territory, it by no means follows that a successor regime in Baghdad would have exposed the area to dangers so great that Saddam would at all costs have had to be preserved. The arguments in favor of a pro-Saddam policy were, and remain, ill-founded and delusive. Radical Islamic fundamentalism may have been, by reason of its pretensions and ambitions, as well as of its rousing millenarian appeal, highly dangerous. So, however, was the ideology of the Ba'th with its pan-Arab ambitions and its equally millenarian demagogy. Why should a Nasser or a Saddam inciting Arab masses be preferable to a Khomeini inciting Muslim masses?

The preservation of Iraq as a state within its existing boundaries was, again, argued to be imperative for regional stability. Ever since its independence in 1932, however, Iraq time and again has itself fomented regional instability, as when it helped the Arab rebellion in Palestine, and sought to annex Kuwait, in the 1930's; as when it sought to give the Axis powers a Middle Eastern base in 1941; as when it organized plots and intrigues aimed at destabilizing Syria in the 1950's; as when it sought again to seize Kuwait in 1961; and as, finally, when Saddam attacked Iran in 1980 and invaded Kuwait in 1990.

To be partial to the kind of ideological politics which has brought about such dangers and disasters, to find it less threatening than Khomeini's ideological politics, is most puzzling. It argues the persistence over decades in the official world of a belief in the benign character of Arab nationalism. The origins of this belief are both complex and obscure. There is little doubt, however, that it has been continuously and assiduously inculcated within universities and other influential precincts, decade after decade, by many Orientalists, notably by the old-established and far-flung firm of Sir Hamilton Gibb and Sons, principal purveyors of this kind of mental baggage.

To have tilted toward Iraq also argued a belief that Iraq's friendship was bought cheaply at the price of Iranian hostility; yet, all things considered, Iran is in so many respects a much more important country than Iraq for the U.S. to have on its side. It is much more populous and extensive than Iraq, it abuts directly on the Soviet Union, and, not being Arab, cannot take part in the dangerous and destructive games of pan-Arab politics. How much more prudent, therefore, to have stood on the sidelines in the Iran-Iraq war, or to have wished both sides the best of luck.

MUCH information has by now come to light which shows the indulgence with which the U.S. treated Iraq during the last decade. Secret data gathered by satellite and surveillance aircraft concerning Iranian military dispositions seem to have been passed on to the Iraqis. Iran's efforts to counter Iraqi attacks on oil tankers sailing the open seas were hamstrung by the presence of a large U.S. naval force, and by the U.S. reflagging of Kuwaiti tankers. The use by Iraq of poison gas on the battlefield was condoned, even though it was in contravention of an international convention to which Iraq was a signatory. Gas was also used against Iraqi Kurds and on that occasion the Iraqi Defense Minister publicly declared that for every insect there is an insecticide.

April Glaspie, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, who quoted this remarkable declaration in her recent testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, also said that she believed at the time that sanctions, which were then mooted in Congress as a response to the gassing of the Kurds, "would have resulted in the withdrawal of our diplomatic mission ultimately from Baghdad." "My point was," she went on, "by staying there we could undertake diplomatic activity. It is very difficult as we all know to undertake diplomatic activity if you're not present and you don't have access to the host government." To the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Glaspie explained that her presence on the spot fortunately enabled her, even though it took her weeks to do so, to get a pledge "that they wouldn't do it again, but"—she triumphantly added—"we got it. We did get it. And I don't think we would have got it if we'd left."

April Glaspie told of another accomplishment. After three years of hard work she at last succeeded in obtaining compensation for the families of sailors who had died when, in 1987, the USS *Stark* suffered an unprovoked attack by an Iraqi warplane. The incident was handled with tender understanding, to the point that it was Iran which attracted blame for the attack.

We have also learned (New York *Times*, April 10, 1991) that $1.5 billion worth of products with military applications were authorized for export to Iraq between 1985 and 1990. In testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Dennis E. Kloske, Under Secretary for Export Administration in the Department of Commerce, alleged that in April 1990 he had asked for an embargo on the export of those products to Iraq but that "the State Department adamantly opposed my posi-

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tion, choosing instead to advocate the maintenance of diplomatic relations with Iraq." We do not, of course, know whether this disagreement relates only to April 1990, or whether Commerce and State had been earlier of one view in approving such exports to Iraq.

Nor is the rationale for this policy in any way mysterious. By the mouth of John Kelly, its Assistant Secretary for the Near East and South Asia, the Department of State testified to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, also in April 1990, that the policy "has been to attempt to develop gradually a mutually beneficial relationship in order to strengthen positive trends in Iraq's foreign and domestic policies." There was a great deal more to this effect.

The policy clearly failed, but not through bad luck or unforeseen developments. Rather, because it plainly rested on a serious misjudgment of the character of the regime and of the ambition of its leader—a misjudgment which lasted for a decade, which no evidence could seemingly shake, or at least induce to reappraise. The failure was too prolonged to be ascribed to this or that officeholder: it was institutional. As such it invites comparison with a similar colossal failure in Britain, where during 1936-37 a policy on Palestine was invented in the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, and was valiantly persisted in until the debacle of May 1948, when a civilized and relatively powerful government simply decided to abandon ignominiously a territory, for which it had been responsible for 30 years, to the barbarous arbitrament of war.

All that has transpired since the invasion of Kuwait goes to indicate that Saddam took the Bush administration by surprise. This, to the onlooker, is itself no surprise given Washington's decade-long mindset. One has, however, to say that even so the administration had no right to be surprised. Leaving aside its judgment of the character and intentions of the Iraqi regime, there were other elementary and general considerations which should have started alarm bells ringing, following the Iran-Iraq ceasefire in the summer of 1988. When the British abandoned the Persian Gulf in 1971, such balance of power as remained in the region was due to the fact that the two largest states, Iran and Iraq, acted as a counterweight to each other. Khomeini's triumph in 1979 and his subsequent devastation of the Iranian army greatly weakened this balance, and the U.S. tilt toward Iraq gave it the *coup de grâce*. Gravity is not trifled with, and water will find its level, so that, even if Iraq had been ruled by angels, the radical undoing of the balance between 1971 and 1988 was bound to create an extremely perilous situation.

The mirror-image of the administration's surprise at Saddam's action was Saddam's own surprise at the administration's reaction to his move. Nothing that had happened between 1980 and literally the very eve of the invasion—when the administration was still adamantly resisting the sanctions which some members of Congress wished to impose on Iraq—would have led Saddam to expect that the U.S. would, in short order, array a stupendous military force against him and unleash it with immense destructive effect. He, however, unlike the administration, was fully entitled to be surprised. A man who, on his way to the top, had negotiated many perilous passages with a single-minded and unscrupulous ruthlessness, rightly judged that actions spoke louder than words, and what U.S. actions he had observed must have seemed contemptibly wimpish and limp-wristed. He said and implied as much in his first and last interview with April Glaspie. His skepticism about U.S. resolve proved unexpectedly wrong, to his own—perhaps temporary—undoing. Now that his enemy has in the aftermath of Desert Storm in effect again become his protector, however, he may console himself with the thought that he was right after all: that unfortunate as it was, Desert Storm was an exception—the exception which proves the rule.

Desert Storm ended abruptly. We know next to nothing about the debates, the calculations, the influences which bore on the sudden decision to halt the destruction of the Ba'thist regime, or about the negotiations between General Schwarzkopf and the Iraqis. After the event, General Schwarzkopf declared that he would have liked to go on. He then retracted his statement. He also said that he had been "suckered" into allowing helicopter flights which the Iraqis had asked permission to make, allegedly for administrative purposes. This statement he did not retract. If he had been "suckered," why then did he not stop the flights when he discovered that helicopters were being used to put down the uprisings which the administration had previously encouraged? There was also a flurry of warnings by the administration that poison gas should not be used inside Iraq, and the helicopters should not be used to attack the civilian population. If these warnings were seriously meant, then the U.S. had ample means of enforcing them.

The result of all these acts of commission and omission has been that Saddam was able to crush opposition to his rule, to kill who knows how many of his subjects, and to make millions of others into homeless and destitute refugees. The justification given for this cruel policy, and for heartlessly persisting in it when its consequences became manifest, was that the integrity of Iraq had to be preserved, and that changing the Iraqi regime was the responsibility not of the U.S., but of the Iraqi people. It is the U.S., however, which allowed the tanks, the helicopters, and the soldiers to escape and be used by a ruler whom no law can restrain, and no popular suffrage can dismiss from office.

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EVEN assuming that maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq is a vital U.S. interest, defending this interest by enabling Saddam to remain in power may exact too high a price not only from the luckless inhabitants of Iraq, but from the U.S. as well. Here, analogies with past events again present themselves to the mind. When the Allies landed in North Africa in November 1942, Admiral Darlan was in Algiers. For a brief moment it looked as though this man, tainted by his record in Vichy and his relations with the Nazis, would be recognized as the French authority with whom the U.S. would deal in respect of these French territories. None can say what consequences would have followed in French politics, in the relations between France and the U.S.—whose representatives had anointed Darlan—and for the good repute of the U.S., had not Darlan's assassination shortly afterward mercifully brought to an end a misguided and disastrous policy. In the present instance it will not fail to be said, with good reason, that having for months held Saddam up to the execration of mankind, the U.S. was now enabling him, for tenebrous and perhaps unavowable reasons, to survive and continue in power. What had started out by being a war in a good cause would now be tarnished by the catastrophic sequels of a policy the rationale for which is alembicated and highly obscure.

Another analogy. Iraq as it exists today is an invention of British policy in 1920-21. It was formed following a rebellion in the summer of 1920 by Shiite tribes in the middle Euphrates, with the encouragement and complicity of Iraqi Sunni officers who were part of an Arab regime set up, financed, and armed by the British in neighboring Syria. The Shiite uprising was put down shortly afterward. A few months after that, however, the same Sunni officers who had encouraged the rebellion from Syria were brought to Baghdad and installed in office by the very British against whom they had fomented the rebellion. It seemed to the Shiites that while they had borne the brunt of the fight against the British and been severely punished for it, their Sunni confederates, instead of being similarly punished, had actually been rewarded, and they themselves were now subject to the unfettered and arbitrary rule of members of a group which had been their traditional oppressor. Instead of the gratitude they expected, the British had to confront in the state which they had invented bitter accusations of deviousness and treachery which have lasted to this day.

Before Desert Storm was unleashed, many voices were raised to warn that an attack on Saddam Hussein would release a flood of anti-American feelings in the Arab and Muslim world. In the event, while the war lasted there was, by and large, very little to justify such alarms except among those populations whose governments or leaders for one reason or another had supported Saddam. American action was seen to be clean-cut, decisive, and justifiable. American arms, above all, had gained a swift victory over an army inept in battle, but adept at oppressing and looting helpless civilians. The U.S., then, was a power whose purposes were clear and clearly executed.

What is the Arab and Muslim world to make of the *volte-face* which so swiftly succeeded the victory? Trust, naturally, will be destroyed. The generality of people, whose minds do not match the subtlety and complexity of Washington policy-makers, will fail to comprehend how such an enemy could be spared, and will fear that behind the imposing military prowess there lurks the canker of uncertainty and the risk of undependability; not a party to go tiger-hunting with. Saddam will seem like one of those legendary heroes who, encompassed by dragons, emerges unscathed from the ordeal, and anti-Americanism will receive a mighty boost. One recalls Nasser triumphant after Suez.

THE abstention of U.S. forces while Iraqi helicopters and tanks were killing Shiites and Kurds recalls other Middle Eastern episodes, of a sinister kind. In the 20th century the Middle East has been the stage of many wars, in which took part Western armies whose credo was that armed conflict had to be subject to certain rules which regulated the conduct of warfare and the behavior of armed forces toward the enemy and toward civilians affected by the operations of war. In particular, it was recognized that duty and honor alike required an army to protect civilians from anarchy and lawlessness. For many reasons it was not always possible to discharge this obligation. And it has happened a few times that, out of some political calculation or other, army commanders have deliberately looked the other way when civilian life and property were put at risk by reason of war.

Before the present events in Iraq, the most recent incident which produced a worldwide outcry took place in 1982 at Sabra and Shatilla, where the victorious Israeli army encamped outside Beirut failed to act when the Lebanese Phalange descended on these Palestinian quarters to carry out an indiscriminate massacre. But nobody in Israel seriously contended that this was anything but a blot on an army which had hitherto prided itself on the purity of its arms.

Sabra and Shatilla had precursors. In 1945, while Tripoli in Libya was under British military administration, the Jews were the victims of an attack by a mob which led to many hundreds being killed and much property destroyed. The military authorities, whether out of negligence or because of some obscure political calculation, did not act to suppress the disorder until too late. If it was negligence, then it was criminal negligence, and if cynical calculation, then nothing was gained by this act of omission.

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In May 1941, following a pro-Nazi coup in Baghdad, Britain and Iraq became involved in hostilities. British troops occupied the port of Basra and the Iraqi administration withdrew from the city, which was thus delivered to rapine. On General Wavell's order, the local British commander refused to order his troops to stop the mob which was on the rampage, and the local British consul adamantly refused all pleas to intervene. The reason for this mean-spirited and dishonorable conduct was that Wavell believed that if British troops stayed on the sidelines, they would not be accused of wishing to supplant the Iraqi government—a government which was then doing its best to damage British interests and fan anti-British sentiment.

Some two weeks later, the Iraqi army collapsed, and British troops were at the gates of Baghdad. They were forbidden from entering the city by the British ambassador, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, in the belief that if British troops did not show their faces, then the prestige and stability of the government which was to succeed that of the failed coup would be preserved and strengthened. The calculation was as foolish as Wavell's, and the action as mean-spirited and dishonorable. It resulted in the murder of some 600 Jews, accused by the mob of being pro-British, and the destruction and looting of a great deal of property.

At the end of September 1918, British troops were at the gates of Damascus. Their commander, General Allenby, forbade all troops, except the so-called Northern Arab Army, to enter the city. It was thus intended to show that Damascus had fallen to Arab forces, and that their leader, the third son of the Sharif of Mecca, should be installed at the head of an Arab administration, so that the French claim to the territory might be foiled. The result, again, was to deliver the city to the horde of Bedouins and Druzes who had been dignified by the title of Northern Arab Army and who went on the rampage and compelled British troops to intervene. A few months later, while British troops were still occupying Syria, a mob fell on Armenians in Aleppo. The Arab administration which had been set up, financed, and armed by the British, was either unable or unwilling to confront the mob, and British troops in the vicinity allowed the disorder to go unhindered, again, presumably, lest the prestige of the Arab administration be hurt.

It is in this dismal perspective that one has to place the fatal American decision to stop the fighting before the regime in Baghdad had asked to surrender, and the even more fatal decision to permit it to use helicopters and armor, which had been allowed to escape destruction, against its own population. These decisions are said to have been motivated by the desire to preserve the integrity of the Iraqi state. Why the integrity of a state with such a continuous record of violence and malfeasance should have been thought worth preserving is quite mysterious. And who says that an Iraq which has preserved its integrity is less of a menace than one in which Baghdad's despotic and terrorizing rule has been dismantled? In such a grisly cost-benefit analysis, the cost is heavy and visible, the benefit shadowy and illusory.

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Of Heroes, Villains, and Valets

Gertrude Himmelfarb

"NO MAN is a hero to his valet." The dictum is generally attributed to the Duke of Condé in the reign of Louis XIV. Hegel amplified it to read: "No man is a hero to his valet, not because the former is no hero, but because the latter is a valet."

This emended version of the proverb first appeared in 1807 in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* and was later repeated in his *Philosophy of History* (where he took the occasion to remind his readers that it was he who originated it, not Goethe, who had been given credit for it). Hegel had a proprietary interest in heroes because they were the "world-historical individuals" whom he saw as the crucial agents in the progress of history. By the same token, he had nothing but contempt for those small-minded men, men with the souls of valets, who reduce historical individuals to their own level of sensibility and consciousness:

> What schoolmaster has not demonstrated that Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar were driven by such passions [for conquest and fame] and were, consequently, immoral? From which it immediately follows that he, the schoolmaster, is a better man than they because he has no such passions, and proves it by the fact that he has not conquered Asia nor vanquished Darius and Porus, but enjoys life and allows others to enjoy it too.

The schoolmaster looks at a historical figure and sees only a private person. He is like the valet, Hegel says, who "takes off the hero's boots, helps him into bed, knows that he prefers champagne, and the like"—and knows nothing more about him. "Historical personages fare badly in historical literature when served by such psychological valets. These attendants degrade them to their own level, or rather a few degrees below the level of their own morality, these exquisite discerners of spirit."

Hegel's schoolmasters are our professors. They are the academic critics who treat the masters of literature with all the reverence of a valet, who put Shakespeare to bed, so to speak, removing his boots, taking off his clothes, tucking him in, secure in the knowledge that he is only a man like themselves, and that they can read, interpret, and deconstruct his plays as if they had written them—as if, to use the current jargon, he is no more "privileged" than they, as if his "authorial voice" has no more "authority" than the voice of the critic. We may also find Hegel's schoolmasters among those academic historians who look for the essence of history not in the great events of public life but in the small events of private life, who reduce public figures to the level of private persons, who recognize no statesmen but only politicians, who see no principles in public affairs but only self-serving interests.

One can appreciate Hegel's point about heroes and valets without being quite so enthusiastic about some of his heroes. Hegel himself does not absolve his heroes of immorality. "World-historical individuals," he says, are not very "considerate" of those who stand in their way. They are likely to "trample down many an innocent flower, crush to pieces many things" in their path. And for this they are indeed subject to "moral reprehension." They are also, he reminds us, subject to the misfortunes that commonly befall great men. They die young, like Alexander, or are murdered, like Caesar, or end their lives in exile, like Napoleon. They are not, in fact, happy men—which may be of some consolation, Hegel observes, to those lesser, envious men who cannot "tolerate greatness and eminence" and can only "criticize the great and belittle greatness."

It may also be of some consolation to know, as Hegel tells us elsewhere, that his kind of hero, the "world-historical individual," is a thing of the past. "Once the [modern] state has been founded, there can no longer be any heroes. They come on the scene only in uncivilized conditions." Believing England to be the most civilized of countries, Hegel would not have expected to find such heroes

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there. But he might have found another species of hero in the Eminent Victorians, who did not aspire to change the course of universal history and had no need, therefore, to trample underfoot "many an innocent flower." They did, however, exhibit an individuality, a force of character and mind, that provoked the schoolmasters of their own time and of later times.

Lord Byron was not, properly speaking, a Victorian, having died before the Queen ascended the throne. But he was one of the heroes of Victorian England, indeed the prototype of the "Byronic hero." His friend, Thomas Moore (himself a popular third-rate poet), survived him long enough to write his biography (really an annotated edition of Byron's letters and journals). Moore was candid with his readers: "[We] contemplate with pleasure a great mind in its undress, and . . . rejoice in the discovery, so consoling to human pride, that even the mightiest, in their moments of ease and weakness, resemble ourselves." Having undressed Byron and discovered him to resemble himself, Moore found it easy to revise and rearrange Byron's letters and journals to his own purposes. At one point he informed his publisher that he was getting on very well with the biography. By omitting an important letter, he was pleased to report, he eliminated one of Byron's affairs—"making a love the less," as he put it; and by redating another affair, he moved it from the period when it actually occurred to an earlier period where it fitted in better with his own account. One wonders what Moore would have made of Byron's incestuous relationship with his half-sister, had he known of it. When the affair was revealed 40 years later, it created a sensation. Tennyson was moved to protest: "What business has the public to want to know all of Byron's wildnesses? He has given them fine work, and they ought to be satisfied."

Tennyson unwittingly pointed to the crucial difference between Victorian biographies and later ones. The Victorians, even while relishing the scandals about their heroes, knew them to be scandals about their *lives*, not about their *works*. Byron's poetry was not thought to be less great because his morals were less than admirable. Nor were George Eliot's novels tainted by her long-standing, extramarital affair with George Lewes. Nor was John Stuart Mill's philosophy discredited by his relationship with his great and good friend Harriet for the twenty years while she was still Mrs. John Taylor. Nor was Carlyle's intellectual reputation diminished by the revelations of his sexual "irregularities," as the Victorians delicately put it. Nor was Gladstone's political career jeopardized by his well-known habit of prowling the streets at night, seeking out prostitutes and lecturing them on the evils of their ways, sometimes bringing them home where his wife dutifully served them tea—or hot chocolate, according to some accounts.

The case of Carlyle is the most interesting of these, because he was not only himself a hero, in the Victorian sense of that word; he was also a great celebrator of the hero. His *Heroes and Hero-Worship* developed a typology of heroes—the hero as god, as prophet, as priest, as king, as poet, as man of letters—as well as the concept of "hero-worship": the "reverence and obedience due to men really great and wise." Like Hegel before him (but without attributing it to Hegel, or for that matter, to Goethe, of whom he was a great admirer), he quoted the adage, "No man is a hero to his valet," adding that if the valet "does not know a hero when he sees him," it is because he has a "mean valet-soul." Unable to abide the idea of greatness, the valet can only cut down the hero to his own size. "Show our critics a great man," Carlyle observed, "a Luther for example, [and] they begin to what they call 'account' for him; not to worship him, but take the dimensions of him—and bring him out to be a little kind of man."

Carlyle's hero is a hero, not a saint, a hero to be revered for his greatness and wisdom, whatever his personal foibles and follies. Moreover, the hero is hero enough to withstand the revelations of those foibles and follies. When Sir Walter Scott's biographer was criticized for recounting some unsavory details about Scott's life, Carlyle defended him and took the occasion to deride the timid biographer who tries to make of his hero a paragon of virtue. "How delicate, decent, is English biography," Carlyle jeered, "bless its mealy mouth!" Such a biography is unworthy of its subject, he said, because it produces not the portrait of a real live hero, but rather a "white, stainless, impersonal ghost hero." Nor is it worthy of the biographer: "To produce not things, but the ghosts of things, can never be the duty of man."

Carlyle's own biographer, James Anthony Froude, quoted this review at length in the preface to his work, in order to disarm the criticism he anticipated for revealing some unflattering aspects of Carlyle's marital life. Carlyle himself, perhaps unwittingly, conspired in that revelation, when he wrote, but did not publish, his *Reminiscences*, and then left the manuscript to Froude as his literary executor, with permission to use it as he liked. The only details Froude withheld from his biography were the evidence (on at least one occasion) of Carlyle's physical abuse of his wife and the rumors of his impotence. These emerged when Froude wrote, but did not publish, another book on Carlyle, bequeathing the manuscript to his own children with instructions to destroy it together with all his other papers and letters. His instructions, needless to say, were ignored and the book was published.

The Victorian biographers, then (at least the best of them), were not nearly as mealy-mouthed as Carlyle suspected. Their heroes had feet of clay;

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but they were heroes nonetheless, because their heroism lay not in their feet (or in other lowly organs) but in their minds and works. Froude never intimated, and his readers never assumed, that Carlyle was less a sage because he was, in a sense, less a man. John Morley, a worthy if not quite eminent Victorian, wrote in his biography of Voltaire, apropos a not altogether creditable event in Voltaire's life: "Alas, why after all should men . . . be so cheerfully ready to contemplate the hinder parts of their divinities?" The answer, of course, is that it is all too human to do so, as it is all too human of their divinities—human, not godly, divinities—to have such hinder parts. But it is also human, if Carlyle is to be believed, for men to revere such divinities for those qualities that make them divine—or, as we say of mortals rather than gods—to revere heroes for those qualities that make them heroic.

VIRGINIA WOOLF once said, only semi-facetiously, "In or about December 1910, human character changed." That was the date of the Post-Impressionist exhibition in London which had so momentous an effect on modern art and, she believed, on the modern novel. If she had been looking for a comparable change in the character of biography, she would have found it in March 1918 when her great friend, Lytton Strachey, published *Eminent Victorians*.

Virginia Woolf characterized this book as the prototype of the "new biography," a biography that for the first time, she said, provided the kind of "authentic information" that revealed the real subject:

> When and where did the real man live; how did he look; did he wear laced boots or elastic-sided; who were his aunts, and his friends; how did he blow his nose; whom did he love, and how; and when he came to die did he die in his bed like a Christian, or . . .

She did not complete the sentence, but it is clear that she thought it very likely that he had not died like a Christian—and certainly that he had not lived like a hero.

At this point a curious reversal of roles took place. As the subject of the biography became less of a hero, the biographer himself became more of a hero:

> He [the biographer] is no longer the serious and sympathetic companion, toiling even slavishly in the footsteps of his hero. Whether friend or enemy, admiring or critical, he is an equal. . . . Raised upon a little eminence which his independence has made for him, he sees his subject spread about him. He chooses; he synthesizes; in short, he has ceased to be the chronicler; he has become an artist.

Thus, while the subject was being portrayed as a "real man," a man shown blowing his nose, wearing boots of a particular kind, making love in a particular manner (the latter being of special interest in the Bloomsbury circle), the biographer had become "an artist." "Raised upon a little eminence," as Woolf says, the biographer could look down upon his subject and observe his petty, all-too-human features.

Virginia Woolf perfectly caught the distinctive quality of the new biography, in which the ostensible hero, the subject, was reduced to the status of valet, while the biographer was elevated to that of hero. From his position of artistic "eminence," Strachey was free to belittle and deride his "Eminent Victorians." Proposing a toast to his own book, Strachey recalled a remark made by another biographer: "When I hear men called 'judicious,' I suspect them; but when I hear them called 'judicious and venerable,' I know they are scoundrels." Strachey amended this to describe his own credo: "When I hear people called 'Victorians,' I suspect them. But when I hear them called 'Eminent Victorians,' I write their lives."

Strachey wrote their lives to expose and ridicule them, to reveal the private selves behind the public façades, the private vices that belied, so he thought, their public virtues. With great artistic skill, he cut his heroes down to size—literally, in the case of Thomas Arnold, the famous headmaster of Rugby, whose legs, Strachey said, were "shorter than they should have been"—a malicious, if not quite relevant (and perhaps not true) description of the proponent of Muscular Christianity. Or he set the scene in such a way as to discredit his subjects: General Gordon, martyr of the siege of Khartoum, was depicted seated at a table on which there was an open Bible and an open bottle of brandy. Or he used rhetorical stratagems for satirical effect: Cardinal Newman, the most respected religious thinker in England, edited a series on *The Lives of the Saints*, which included biographies, Strachey conscientiously informs us, of St. Bega, St. Adamnan, St. Gundleus, St. Guthlake, Brother Drithelm, St. Amphibalus, St. Wulstan, St. Ebba, St. Neot, St. Ninian, and Cunibert the Hermit—the enumeration of all those unfamiliar names making a mockery of the very idea of sainthood. Or he scoffed at their enthusiasms: Florence Nightingale, he said, was given to "morbid longings" for God, but her image of God was a "glorified sanitary engineer"; she could hardly distinguish between "the Deity and the Drains."

In each case, Strachey attacked his heroes not only in their hinder parts but in their higher parts, their vital organs, the very qualities that made them heroes. This was the great difference between Victorian biography and the "new biography." The Victorians humanized their heroes, exposed their private vices without denying their public virtues. The new biographers exposed their vices (or more often follies) to dishonor them—to make anti-heroes of them.

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Yet even anti-heroes have some vestigial quality of the heroic. They are, at the very least, recognizable individuals. The Eminent Victorians, as Strachey portrayed them, were caricatures, objects of mockery, but they retained some lingering traces of eminence if only by virtue of their individuality; indeed, his caricatures sometimes had the effect of making them seem more individualistic, more distinctive, than they actually were. It remained for the "new history" to complete the task of the "new biography," eliminating those last remnants of heroism by denying not only the idea of eminence but the very idea of individuality.

Two years after Strachey's book appeared, H. G. Wells inaugurated the "new history" (as it was soon baptized) with his best-selling *Outline of History*. Defining history as "the common adventure of all mankind," Wells professed to write a history which was not only *about* the common man but also *for* the common man; the common man was both his subject and his ideal reader. In his history, he boasted, a so-called world-historical individual like Napoleon would be seen in proper perspective, strutting upon the crest of history like a "cockerel on a dunghill."

Today the term common man sounds invidious (or, perhaps, sexist); the "politically correct" terms—which to some of us may sound equally invidious—are the ordinary people, the anonymous masses. By now these ordinary, anonymous people threaten to displace not only world-historical individuals like Napoleon, but all elitist figures, a term that is taken to include presidents as well as kings, working-class leaders as well as aristocrats—all those who stand out from the anonymous masses simply by virtue of their *not* being anonymous, their having individual, recognizable identities. Moreover, it is not only elitist individuals who are disparaged; it is elitist themes—the great events of history in which individuals necessarily figure prominently, and the great ideas and books which are the products of great minds. In place of the old "history from above," we are enjoined to write "history from below," the history of ordinary people in the ordinary, daily activities of their lives. By such means, we are told, we may rescue the poor, anonymous masses from "the enormous condescension of posterity."

How can one quarrel with such a worthy purpose? Why should one not want to enlarge and deepen the scope of history by recovering the memory of those who have been forgotten? No sensible person, certainly no conscientious historian, would object to that. One might, however, reasonably object when the suspicion of elitist history leads to the exclusion or belittling of subjects—great figures, great events, great ideas—which actually determined the course of history, for *all* people. One might also object when history from below itself becomes an exercise in condescension—when the historian denies to the ordinary people ideas, motives, and interests over and above the ordinary concerns of their daily lives. For it is then not only the historian who is reduced to the level of valet, who cannot see anything heroic in history. It is also the people who are reduced to that level, who are denied any aspect of the heroic, any connection with a "universal consciousness," as Hegel would say, an order of being that elevates them above the immediate, mundane, particular circumstances of their lives.

This point was brought vividly home to me a few years ago when I wrote an essay arguing that the political events of history were not only important in themselves but were important to the ordinary people of the time, and, indeed, were of great interest to those people. Among my critics was a well-known social historian who protested that political affairs were, and still are, of little concern to ordinary people. Surely, he said, the vast majority of people have always thought that "where they lived and how they made a living, who they married, and what happened to their children" were far more important than "who won the last election." I was struck by the arrogance of that comment—as if only a Harvard professor could be expected to care about his job, home, and children, and *also* about the last election.

The latest display of this professional deformation is the attack on the "canon" on the grounds that it is dominated by "dead white males"—DWM's as they are familiarly known. I was introduced to a variation on this term—"big guys," BG's—by the head of the women's-studies program in a distinguished college, who explained that the problem is not only that these big guys are guys, but that they are big, thus "privileging," as she put it, great books, ideas, and events—and, worse, privileging the very idea of greatness, of genius, of the unique person seeking transcendent truths that are presumed to have enduring value. This idea itself—the idea that there is such a thing as greatness, genius, uniqueness, that people should celebrate and aspire to such qualities, that there are truths that transcend race, gender, and class, and that all people, even ordinary people, can share in such truths and be elevated by them—all of this, she insisted, is a peculiarly masculine idea. And it can only be rectified, she went on, by creating a feminist "counter-canon" representing women who embody peculiarly feminine values—women poets who say, "I'm not creating this poem for eternity"; and women writers who say, "I don't want to celebrate transcendent truths, I want to celebrate the little things in women's lives . . . the small nurturing things that women do."

I would like to think that this is an extreme attitude, that most feminists do not want to replace the canon of BG's, big guys, with a counter-canon of LG's, little gals. But the presumption

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against greatness goes deep. It is, in fact, at the heart of the debate about "great books." The argument is no longer about the specific composition of the canon, the inclusion of this or that book, but about the very idea of greatness, a greatness that traditionally has been thought to transcend race, gender, and class—and genre, too—so that it was once taken for granted that Shakespeare is more worthy of study than Superman, that high culture is higher, more elevating, than popular culture, and that some events in history are more momentous than others. The feminist who would relegate women to the "little things" of life—consigning them, an old-fashioned feminist might say, to the kitchen—is diminishing and trivializing their lives as surely as the historian who assumes that ordinary people are indifferent to politics, to public affairs beyond the province of their daily lives. Even Hegel, not noted for his democratic proclivities, gave the ordinary people a larger role than that. Those people who are immersed in the particularity of their lives, even they, he said, have access to the universal; they partake of the universal by virtue of their membership in the state, whose laws and institutions elevate them above the particular and give them a role in the evolving course of history.

Recently we were presented with dramatic evidence of the Hegelian thesis in a form that Hegel, I like to think, would have appreciated—that extraordinary television series, *The Civil War*. Among other things, the film exemplifies the heroic nature of a great historical event, an event whose greatness is not obscured, and was not obscured at the time, by the multitude of small events of which it was comprised—the muck and mire of battlefields, of generals competent and incompetent, of soldiers maimed and dying. For all of that, the Civil War was, from beginning to end, a great national, political, social, and ideological experience which can only be understood (as the film makes clear) by a skillful combination of history from above and history from below—the magnificent rhetoric of Lincoln's speeches complementing the homely and very moving rhetoric of soldiers' letters to their wives. It was a truly heroic event in which privates in the army and newly liberated slaves were as much the heroes as generals and statesmen, partaking in the universal, as Hegel would have said, and being elevated by that universality even, unhappily, as it often destroyed them.

The problem with a valet-like conception of history is not only its denigration of greatness and heroism but also its denigration of individuality and freedom. A century-and-a-half ago Tocqueville anticipated just this problem. In a remarkably prescient and very brief chapter (only three or four pages) of *Democracy in America*, entitled "Some Characteristics Peculiar to Historians in Democratic Centuries," Tocqueville described the essential distinction between the old history and the new. In aristocratic periods, he said, historians tend to "attribute everything that happens to the will and character of particular men . . ., and unhesitatingly suppose slight accidents to be the cause of the greatest revolutions." In democratic periods, on the other hand, they tend to "attribute hardly any influence over the destinies of mankind to individuals. . . . But they make general causes responsible for the smallest particular events"—causes such as "the nature of races, the physical character of the country, or the spirit of civilization." The danger, Tocqueville warned, was that in belittling or ignoring individual will in the making of history, the historian also belittles "human freedom":

> A cause so vast that it acts at the same time on millions of men, and so strong that it bends them all together in the same direction, may easily seem irresistible. Seeing that one does yield to it, one is very near believing that one cannot stand up to it.
>
> Thus historians who live in democratic times do not only refuse to admit that some citizens may influence the destiny of a people, but also take away from the people themselves the faculty of modifying their own lot and make them depend either on an inflexible providence or on a kind of blind fatality.

Tocqueville's remarks apply to determinisms of every kind—the economic determinism of Marxism, or the geographic and demographic determinism of the French school of *Annaliste* historians, or the deterministic trinity currently popular in America: race, gender, and class. Each has the same effect, of belittling the will, ideas, actions, and freedom of individuals. Today more than ever we have reason to heed Tocqueville's words: "It is important not to let this idea [of free will] grow dim, for we need to raise men's souls, not to complete their prostration."

Without will, without individuals, there are no heroes. But neither are there villains. And the absence of villains is as prostrating, as soul-destroying, as the absence of heroes. About the same time that the Duke of Condé coined the proverb, "No man is a hero to his valet," another French notable, La Rochefoucauld, enunciated another important truth: "There are heroes of evil as well as of good." The two maxims may be amalgamated: "No man is a hero to his valet, and no man is a villain to his valet." To the valet the master is a man like all men—someone whose boots have to be removed, who has to be helped into bed, who has a taste for champagne. The valet may even know other things about him, whether he is a good or bad master, a good or bad husband and father. What the valet will not know is whether he is a hero or a villain—a great statesman or philosopher or, it may be, a tyrant or charlatan.

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Nor will the historian know these things if the historian adheres to the currently fashionable theory of history known as structuralism. According to this theory, the decisive facts about Nazism, for example, are not the ideas, policies, or even actions of Hitler and the Nazis, but the structure of the German state, the nature of its bureaucracy and pressure groups, the exigencies of economics and geography. The effect of this structuralist analysis is as Tocqueville predicted: to depreciate the importance of individuals, ideas, and will—to belittle the role of Hitler and the Nazi leaders, to minimize or even deny their avowed intentions of conquest and mass murder, and thus evade the issue of evil. As the late Lucy Dawidowicz, the author of the monumental work, *The War Against the Jews*, put it: "The structuralists have thus eliminated the exercise of free will in human society and deprived men and women of their capacity to choose between good and evil."

To structuralize Nazism is to trivialize it, to make evil banal. It is also to de-historicize it, to belie the facts of history. The ideas and intentions, the willful policies and actions of Nazis are surely as much the reality of history as the structure of the state, of peer groups and bureaucracies, of economic and geo-military forces. Even to understand the unanticipated consequences of ideas and policies, it is necessary to understand the ideas and policies that gave rise to those consequences. Structuralists criticize the traditional historian of Nazism for the fallacy, as they see it, of personalizing history—as if one of the basic principles of Nazism were not the Fuehrer principle, deifying precisely the person of Hitler; or for the fallacy of intentionalism—as if Hitler had not publicly announced his intentions and as if those intentions were not literally, all too literally, executed.

The same structuralist analysis has been applied to the history of the Soviet Union under Stalin. The new "cohort" of historians (as they refer to themselves) do not see Stalinism as a form of totalitarianism, a tyranny imposed by the Stalinist regime in accord with Communist ideology. Indeed, they deny that either the regime or the ideology was responsible for most of the events of that time. The policies and actions associated with Stalin, they say, were more often improvised than part of a deliberate strategy, reflecting pressures from "social constituencies," from groups below rather than from the regime above. This interpretation has the effect, the structuralists are pleased to report, of undermining "the totalitarian model of the Stalinist system to the point where it is no longer worth using." One of these historians explains that such concepts as totalitarianism and the terror are obsolete because they are the products of the cold-war mentality and "anti-Communist hysteria" that had unfortunately infected the older scholars. Another finds them objectionable because they are moral judgments, and "judging Stalin," we are told, "is an exercise in moral imperialism."

The new school claims that the impersonal, non-judgmental language of structuralism is more objective, because less moralistic and political, than the old terms of discourse. This argument might be more plausible were it not itself part of an overtly political interpretation of Soviet history. The historian Peter Kenez explains why it is precisely for reasons of objectivity that the historian must confront the facts of terror and totalitarianism:

> Historians must write about the terror not in order to vent their indignation, but because that subject is essential to our understanding of absolutely every aspect of Soviet life in the 1930's. Terror was not an epiphenomenon. It is not a topic like the history of Soviet sports or Soviet opera. Because of the terror, parents talked differently to their children, writers wrote differently, workers and managers talked to one another differently. . . . Because of the terror, millions perished. . . . Whatever topics we choose, we cannot get away from the fact that those were murderous times and Stalinism was a murderous system.

The traditional historian may be comforted by the fact that the revisionist school is not dominant in Soviet history, any more than it is in German history. But it is by no means insignificant, especially among younger historians who pride themselves on being on the cutting edge of the discipline. To be sure, now that Soviet leaders have themselves confessed to some—not yet all—of the murderous facts of the Communist regime, it may be a little more difficult for historians, however sophisticated, to dispute them. But only a little more difficult. An ingenious historian can always find ways of eluding reality.

One such historian, the father of historical structuralism and the most influential leader of the *Annaliste* school, is Fernand Braudel. Braudel's celebrated work, *The Mediterranean in the Time of Philip II*, is a model of *Annaliste* doctrine: the doctrine that the long-term, inanimate, impersonal forces of history—geography, demography, ecology, economics—are the "deeper realities" of history, in contrast to short-term events which are ephemeral and superficial. In Braudel's work, these short-term events include not only the wars and conquests of Philip's reign but also the Inquisition and the Renaissance (the last two sometimes occupying a middle ground known as "conjunctures"). In a memorable passage, Braudel compares such short-term events to fireflies that glow briefly in the night and quickly disappear, leaving behind no illumination, no trace of their existence.

Braudel's book is an extraordinary feat of scholarship, if only because he wrote it from memory, without benefit of libraries or archives, while he

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was in a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany during World War II. He later recalled the temper of mind in which he had written it. It was, he said, "a direct existential response to the tragic times I was passing through."

> All those occurrences which poured in upon us from the radio and the newspapers of our enemies, or even the news from London which our clandestine receivers gave us—I had to outdistance, reject, deny them. Down with occurrences, especially vexing ones! I had to believe that history, destiny, was written at a much more profound level.

The "occurrences" or "short-term events" that Braudel sought to "outdistance, reject, deny" were nothing less than one of the most devastating wars in modern history and one of the most catastrophic events of all times, the Holocaust, both of which were precipitated not by the long-term forces of history but by individuals who surely deserve the epithet, "heroes of evil." What is most extraordinary is that it was while Braudel was in prison, experiencing personally, existentially, the brunt of that evil, that he persuaded himself that such individuals and short-term events were of little significance in history. The Holocaust as a "short-term" event—the mind boggles.

At the same time that Braudel was in that German prisoner-of-war camp writing the consummate product of *Annaliste* history, a young literary critic in this country (about the same age as Braudel) was reviewing a new edition of a much older *Annals*, that of Tacitus. Lionel Trilling was impressed by a sentence in the *Annals* which seemed to him to capture the essence of that work. "This I regard as History's highest function," Tacitus wrote, "to let no worthy action be uncommemorated, and to hold out the reprobation of posterity to evil words and deeds." Trilling was not a historian—it is very unlikely that he had heard of the *Annalistes*, who were then little known even among professional historians. But he was acutely aware of the history of his own times, of Nazism and Stalinism. And he was superbly alert to intellectual fashions, to the predilection, for example, of modern historians for the long view, a view, Trilling suspected, that obscured and even justified the evils of history:

> To minds of a certain sensitivity "the long view" is the falsest historical view of all, and indeed the insistence on the length of perspective is intended precisely to overcome sensitivity—seen from a sufficient distance, it says, the corpse and hacked limbs are not so very terrible, and eventually they even begin to compose themselves into a "meaningful pattern."

Trilling, like Tocqueville before him, preferred an older mode of history, a history capable, as Tacitus said, of commemorating "worthy actions" and reprobating "evil words and deeds"—a history of heroes and villains as well as ordinary people. That mode of history is inconsistent with the determinism implicit in the long view—those general causes that Tocqueville spoke of, causes that deny free will and belittle human freedom. In one of his last public appearances shortly before his death, Trilling said that he thought of himself as "a 19th-century person" because he still "believed in the efficacy of the will at a time when few other intellectuals did." Asked to comment on structuralism, he said that thirty years ago he had fought against Stalinism and that he would, if he were young, "fight structuralism today as another system antithetical to will and individual freedom."

Indeed, without will and freedom, there can be no virtue and vice. And without virtue and vice, there can be no heroes and villains. There can only be valets—valets who recognize no heroes whether of good or of evil, who recognize no greatness of any kind: no momentous events in history, no superior works of art, literature, or philosophy, no essential distinction between the trivial and the important. If such a valet mentality prevailed, we would all, the most humble and the most eminent of us, be diminished by it. Fortunately, there is that in the human spirit which cannot long tolerate such an abasement. Having recently witnessed the extraordinary affirmation of freedom and will in Eastern Europe, we may begin to hope that our schoolmasters will be edified and elevated by these events—great events, complete with heroes, villains, and valets.

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The Last Communist

Mark Falcoff

Consider for a moment the career of this Caribbean dictator: he takes office as a reformer, but quickly reveals a vast, indeed unlimited, appetite for power. He is able to sustain himself in this role partly through the support of one of the superpowers, which regards him—for all his faults and limitations—as a concrete geopolitical asset. At home, he eliminates all centers of independent life; abroad, he connives at the overthrow of neighboring governments, supplying local sympathizers with arms, money, and training. He runs his country like a private estate, overseeing every detail of its economic, political, and military life. In order to do this, he parcels out important responsibilities to his brother. His country—to quote a former American ambassador—is "a true modern totalitarian state, complete with racism, espionage apparatus, torture chambers, and murder factories."

For three decades the dictator's name is virtually synonymous with that of his country, and although his jails are full, spies and informers everywhere, and his people impoverished, he is often praised by foreign admirers and major world leaders. Then, one day, his throne is shaken by new winds of democracy and freedom blowing throughout his region and in the wider world. Yet in spite of all predictions—and dozens of assassination plots—he holds onto power, either because (as his apologists claim), in spite of everything, he enjoys enduring popularity among his people, or because (as his critics point out) his opposition remains weak and divided, dead or in exile. Only human mortality seems to limit his survival.

The dictator so described happens to be Generalíssimo Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, who ruled the Dominican Republic with an iron hand from 1930 to 1962. But the reader who anticipated Fidel Castro instead would not have been off the mark: without a single alteration the same lines accurately summarize the career of the dictator who has just passed his 30th anniversary in power in Cuba. The difference—a crucial one, to be sure—is that Trujillo lacked an ideology—that, and a superpower ally willing to sponsor or countenance his activities outside of his own island-state. Now, however, that Castro has lost (or is in the process of losing) the support of the Soviet Union and what used to be called the Eastern bloc, and the international ideological movement of which he was a part is virtually decomposing before our eyes, he suddenly shrinks to his proper geographical and cultural proportions, and the phenomenon of Castroism threatens to become nothing but an unfortunate subcategory of Caribbean political folklore. Even then, however, we still may not fully grasp its meaning.

In truth, understanding Castro has always called for keeping both aspects—the folkloric and the ideological—in approximately equal focus. Failure to do so has led to some extremely sterile debates: whether Castro was "pushed" into the arms of the Soviet Union in 1960-61 or "jumped"; whether his export of revolutionary violence in Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa was undertaken "at the orders" of the Soviet Union or on "his own initiative"; whether—together with North Korea's Kim Il-Sung—Castro is the last serious, practicing Marxist-Leninist or merely a slightly extravagant Latin American nationalist.

These disputes probably tell us more about ourselves than about Castro himself—about our desire to find rationality in what is often an irrational universe, or (what amounts to the same thing) our need to trivialize volatile and unattractive political phenomena so that they can no longer threaten us. In the particular case of Fidel Castro, it could easily be said that, 30 years after bursting onto the screen of our own political consciousness, he still evades our deepest understanding. Part of the problem has been the sheer paucity of hard information. But part, too, has been the lack of a framework adequate to make sense of what we do know.

In both areas we are aided immeasurably by a new, major biography by Georgie Anne Geyer, veteran foreign correspondent and syndicated columnist, who has been covering Cuba and the Caribbean since the mid-1960's.* *Guerrilla Prince*

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* *Guerrilla Prince: The Untold Story of Fidel Castro*, Little, Brown, 407 pp., $22.45.

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reminds us what journalism at its best once was and can still be—a combination of scholarship, reportage, analysis, and serious reflection. It also represents an exhausting backlog of journeys stretching over nearly two decades, not merely to Cuba but to dozens of other countries where Castro has had some claim to a relationship—to Spain (where his father's relatives still eke out an existence in rural Galicia), to Mexico, Nicaragua, Argentina, and Venezuela; and also to the Soviet Union, Poland, Germany, Angola, Ethiopia, and India. In the process, Geyer interviewed more than 600 persons, including not only Castro himself (four times) and his Vice President, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, but people who grew up with him (Luis Aguilar), who taught him as a law student (Herminio Portell-Vilá), who knew him as a young politician and revolutionary (Melba Hernández, José Pardo Llada, Martha Frayde, Huber Matos), or who subsequently dealt with him as an ally (Nikita Khrushchev, Régis Debray, Salvador Allende, Michael Manley, Juan Bosch, Anastas Mikoyan, Eldridge Cleaver, Daniel Ortega, Jonas Savimbi*) or as an adversary (Richard Nixon, General Vernon Walters, William Colby, Robert McNamara). Some of her most dramatic information has been gleaned from high-level defectors from the regime (there have been many more of them in recent years than is generally realized): General Rafael del Pino, former head of the Cuban air force; Carlos Franqui, former editor of *Revolución*; and intelligence officers Juan Benemelis and Florentino Aspillaga.

From these and others we learn many personal details that have gone unreported in the international press. For example: that Castro's former wife Mirta has remarried and lives quietly in Madrid (on notice not to speak to any journalist about her former husband if she ever wishes to see her son again); that he has five illegitimate sons by a stunning Cuban beauty, Dalia Soto del Valle Jorge; that, like his son by Mirta, Fidel Castro Díaz-Balart ("Fidelito"), all have been educated in the Soviet Union; that in spite of his vaunted austerity, he has "an extraordinary range" of homes, including a hunting estate which bears a remarkable resemblance to the ones seized from the old aristocrats by the *nomenklatura* of Eastern European Communism (because the *caudillo* has a fondness for bowling, some of his residences even have alleys specially imported from Japan); that in spite of his alleged puritanism, Castro has had extensive dealings with the Colombian drug cartel, sometimes through the good offices of Panama's General Manuel Noriega; that dozens of dummy Cuban "corporations" receive tens of millions of dollars in exchange for such shady transactions as false visas or the illegal use of dead bodies; that a "secret fund" of $4.2 million has been deposited in Swiss banks for the future discretion of the leader; and so on.

Yet it is not so much the individual pieces of information—startling as some of those are—which make Geyer's portrait so compelling, but rather the way she assembles them. Her intention, she writes, is to provide a "psychologically definitive" portrait. "What," she asks, is "the nature of the spell that Castro wove over his 'masses'? How [is] it possible that a man from a small and powerless island should have been able to garner so much power that he could effectively challenge the American superpower itself?" And lingering in the background is an even more troubling question: what is there about Castro which—notwithstanding a suffocating authoritarianism, a failed economy, a record of political confinement for dissidents utterly unmatched in the history of Latin America—has made him an enduring cultural-political icon for so many in the democratic West?

2.

Cuba is like other Latin American countries, only more so. It has always been a crossroads of two deeply antagonistic cultures—one with roots in the Counter-Reformation, the other in the Enlightenment. In some ways Cuban history is a replay in miniature of the Anglo-Spanish rivalries of the 16th and 17th centuries, with all that implies for religion, social values, and political institutions. The Spanish impress upon Cuban life has been extraordinarily intense: until defeated by the United States in 1898, Madrid had ruled the island continuously for 400 years, including three full generations after all the other Spanish-American societies had shed their colonial status. On the other hand, until the island was granted formal independence in 1901, the prospect of outright annexation to the United States was always a concrete possibility. Throughout Cuba's history, the mere existence of the United States remained the most important single factor in its national life. Nor—with the best will in the world—could it have been otherwise; by reason of geography alone, the United States was simply too large and too close to be ignored. Another complication: though Cubans were always deeply attracted to the American way of life, it always lay just beyond their reach. This introduced a permanent frustration into Cuban politics, of which Fidel Castro has been the logical end-product and beneficiary.

His father, Angel, was an artillery sergeant from Galicia who fought against the Cuban insurgents in the war of independence (1895-98), then settled there and lived with a Cuban servant girl who was the mother of Fidel Castro and several other siblings. Starting as a day laborer for the United Fruit Company on one of its huge agri-industrial complexes, Angel Castro eventually became a

* Cleaver, Savimbi, and Manley have since become adversaries.

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wealthy landowner in his own right, with a 10,000-acre hacienda in the Oriente province. His children grew up economically privileged but socially dislocated, or at any rate "outsiders," in a Cuban republic where one's social status was determined largely by proximity to all things American.

In his intolerance, his dogmatism, his personalism, his penchant for individual acts of useless heroism, and his hatred of the United States, Fidel Castro is a legitimate product of his Spanish heritage—a heritage that he does not trouble to deny. As a matter of fact, until recently Spain was the only West European country to maintain a full-scale aid program to Cuba.* This is not something to be credited only (or even particularly) to the existence of the current Socialist government in Madrid; as Geyer points out, Castro's relations with the late Spanish dictator Francisco Franco were extraordinarily warm, punctuated by the continued exchange of gifts and compliments. Both men yearned to meet (though they never did), but when Franco—scourge of his own political Left—died in 1974, Castro declared a full week of official mourning in Cuba.

This cultural tilt also explains much of Castro's distaste for the Cuban middle class, which consciously modeled itself upon that of the United States, sometimes—as in the case of the family of his former wife—to the point of converting to Protestantism. Ironically, while Castro has destroyed and dispersed this class—once the largest and most successful in Latin America—he continues to prefer as companions women drawn from its ranks, always, Geyer says, "Americanized, English-speaking, beautiful (most, but not all . . . blond), and from 'old families' who had fought against the Spaniards."

3.

ALTHOUGH politics interested Castro from his earliest days in the university, there is nothing about this period which prefigures his present ideological attachments. One fellow student recalls his fascination with the European fascists of the 1940's; another remembers him saying that he would like to be a Communist ("But only if I can be Stalin"). If Castro eventually declared himself a Communist, it was because, as his one-time associate and fellow revolutionary Huber Matos put it, of all ideologies Marxism-Leninism "offered him the [best] opportunity of becoming the undisputed ruler of the country for the rest of his life."

Certainly the only constant that characterizes Castro's early career is a relentless quest for power, and a willingness to use violence to advance his progress. At the university he enlisted in several of the "direct-action" groups that employed robbery and assassination in the service of some extremely vague ideological goals. Though he eventually received his law degree, he never actually practiced, and in fact throughout his entire life he has lived on the wealth produced by others. (Even his honeymoon to New York City in 1948 was paid for by, of all people, the then-ex-President—and future dictator—Fulgencio Batista, a friend of his new father-in-law.) Castro never lacked energy, but he has always been incapable of summoning up the discipline necessary for sustained and systematic work.

Two quite different factors made possible Castro's eventual ascent. The first was Cuban politics, which in the best of times never rose much above a kind of gangster populism. For the first 30 years of Cuban independence, public life was little more than a pillaging of the public treasury, with different heroes of the war of independence taking turns distributing spoils to their followers. The system was broken in the 1930's by a revolution led (somewhat improbably) by students and noncommissioned officers of the army, but what followed, if marginally more democratic, was profoundly uninspiring. Posing as men of the democratic Left (both had been radicals in earlier years), Presidents Ramón Grau San Martín (1944-48) and Carlos Prío (1948-52) were unusually corrupt. Thus, when General Batista seized power on the eve of elections in 1952, there were few who thought the system worth defending. As for Batista himself, though once a reasonably decent President (1940-44), by 1952 he had become squalid and self-indulgent, and, as time went on, increasingly authoritarian. This unlovely combination eventually readied Cubans for a radical break—by the late 50's it was simply a matter of someone emerging to lead them.

At the start there was no compelling reason why that person had to be Fidel Castro, who at the time of Batista's 1952 coup had been a virtually unknown lawyer (and candidate for Congress in elections which had never been held). His hagiographers are fond of pointing out that Castro was bold enough to file a suit against Batista's putsch at the Court of Constitutional Guarantees, and that in the following year he and a group of determined (or desperate) followers attempted to overthrow the government by seizing the Moncada Fortress in Santiago, Cuba's second largest city. But the larger cause of Castro's rise was the timely demise of others who might more properly have led the opposition to Batista—particularly Eduardo Chibás, a radio commentator who held all Cuba's attention on his Sunday-night broadcasts until he overreached himself in his accusations, and committed suicide after leaving the air one night in 1951.

There is, in fact, an even more sinister pattern in Castro's relationship to potential rivals. Some

* This program has been temporarily suspended because of Castro's refusal to allow the Spanish embassy in Havana to harbor Cubans seeking political asylum.

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have disappeared under unexplained or doubtful circumstances: Frank País, the leader of the civic resistance against Batista, whom Geyer fairly well establishes was betrayed to the Cuban police by Vilma Espín, current wife of Castro's brother Raúl; Camilo Cienfuegos, the most popular of the guerrilla commanders in the war against Batista, who perished in a mysterious aviation accident shortly after the victory of the revolution; or Ché Guevara himself, sent to a virtual certain death first in the Congo, and then in Bolivia. Others have been deliberately eliminated in spectacular show trials—Huber Matos, labor leader David Salvador, and, lately, General Armando Ochoa, the most distinguished soldier in Cuba's army. Geyer is particularly strong in showing how Castro—secreted away in the fastness of the Oriente province, head of a tiny guerrilla "army" that rarely saw any real action during the late 50's—captured the imagination of the Cuban public through the creative manipulation of the news media (first in Cuba, later in the New York *Times* through Herbert Matthews), and also by carefully playing different opponents of Batista off against each other. (Some, like País, perished in the *real* front lines of the war, which were in Cuba's cities, particularly Havana.) By the time Castro entered Havana on New Year's Day 1959, there remained no alternative to him, and the entire nation was ready to surrender itself to its new idol. The revolution was his to make—in any configuration he might choose.

4.

And the choice was his alone. One of the most durable foreign-policy legends of all time is the notion that the United States, by its supposedly cruel and ungenerous response to the infant revolution in Cuba, forced Castro to align himself with the Soviets. Geyer patiently unravels all the details, exposing this story for the myth it is: outside the immediate circle of Ambassador Earl E.T. Smith and his military advisers, most American diplomats in Cuba openly and enthusiastically backed Castro's revolutionaries. Indeed, a former CIA agent recalled in 1987 that this even included his own station chief. The State Department—torn between Smith's cables and all other information it was receiving—thrashed about in search of a "third force"—"a policy," Geyer dryly observes, "that people who live in ordered societies so love to insist upon for those who live in disordered ones."

In the end, in any case, the U.S. role was irrelevant, as it so often has been in Latin America. Batista fled, Castro assumed power, and Washington decided to do its best by him. When the new Cuban leader came to this country in 1960—contrary to the way he himself would later describe the trip—he was, writes Geyer, "feted, admired, and celebrated everywhere he went." So favorable was the reception, and so evidently taken by it was its object that (Geyer reveals) during those heady days Fidel was getting repeated phone calls from his brother Raúl (who had remained behind) accusing him of "selling out to the Americans." Teresa Casuso, now Cuba's ambassador to the United Nations, even recalls that at one point Fidel "almost wept" at his brother's accusations.

Try as they might, however, U.S. officials—including Acting Secretary of State Christian Herter, who convened an extraordinary high-level lunch to welcome Castro to Washington—could not get the visiting delegation to concentrate on serious economic talks. The reason was simple: the new Cuban leader had already decided upon a different course for his country. Here is the way that Geyer explains Castro's apparent ideological conversion:

> Fidel Castro never "became" a Communist as one becomes a Mason, a Catholic, an SS officer, a Hare Krishna, or a Zoroastrian. He did not adapt himself to an ideology; he found an ideology to adapt itself to him . . . he brought "Communism" to power through his own ego, instead of through an ideology imposed through a movement.
>
> In fact, Castro never really became a "Communist" at all. The new thing in history that Castro did was to destroy the Communist party and create his own *Fidelista* party, which he called Communist in order to stand up to the United States and to gain backing and to borrow power from the Soviet Union. For the first time in history, a national leader converted the Communist party to himself!

As Geyer notes, there was a cold and implacable logic to Castro's choice: a close relationship with the United States would have required him to conform to the notions of "bourgeois legality" and constitutional government, or at least would have subjected him to the kind of pressures from Washington which had circumscribed the power of other Cuban dictators. Evidently nothing of the sort would be forthcoming from the Kremlin.

Moreover, to become a client state of the Soviet Union—a vast Eurasian land mass itself imperfectly civilized, and incomparably remote—would insulate Cuba from countervailing cultural influences. At least until the advent of Gorbachev, there was nothing about Soviet society to invite Cubans to invidious comparisons; if anything, the attractions ran entirely in the other direction, at least at the beginning. (As Anastas Mikoyan remarked upon his arrival in 1960, Cuba's revolution exuded "a sense of romanticism," which, he added in a candid aside, "by that time had almost been lost in our country.")

Much has been made by Castro apologists of the counterrevolutionary adventure sponsored by the United States in April 1961 and forever after known as the Bay of Pigs—the landing of several thousand anti-Castro Cubans on the southern

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coast of the island. What should be remembered best about that event, however, is the remarkable restraint which the United States showed: if it had really been determined to bring Castro down, it would not have denied the insurgents the air cover they required, or (in the final instance) failed to send in U.S. troops to keep the operation from collapsing altogether. One might well ask what President John F. Kennedy had in mind by picking a fight with Castro with one hand tied behind his back; whatever it was, it could not have been a commitment to overthrow the Cuban dictator at any cost.

The Kennedy-Khrushchev accords which concluded the missile crisis of October 1962 are another monument to American restraint. In some ways, indeed, the U.S. promise not to invade Cuba in exchange for the withdrawal of Soviet nuclear weapons from the island could be seen as a victory for Moscow and Havana as well—since by installing the missiles in the first place, they obtained (admittedly, at very high risk) something they probably would not otherwise have obtained.*

As Geyer points out, Castro's approach to the United States has been rather less restrained. Though the United States was finally persuaded to accept his regime as an accomplished fact, Castro has never quite returned the compliment: witness his unflagging support for Puerto Rican terrorists and black American "revolutionaries." On a somewhat grander level of geopolitics, Khrushchev's recently published posthumous memoirs reveal that Castro was urging the Soviets to launch a preemptive nuclear strike against the United States in the event that it attempted to invade the island to disarm the missiles—a counsel which the Soviet leader quite properly regarded as suicidal (not to say apocalyptic).

Again, while we are often reminded of the numerous CIA plots to assassinate Castro (none of which ever got off the ground), Geyer lays out some rather disturbing evidence—not conclusive, to be sure, but too compelling to be dismissed out of hand—that Castro may have been involved in the assassination of President Kennedy. Nor has the Cuban dictator mellowed much with time; General del Pino told Geyer that after the U.S. invasion of Grenada in 1983, Castro ordered his air-force fighter planes programmed to fly against the Turkey Point nuclear installation 24 miles south of Miami. Del Pino was shocked; didn't the dictator realize, he asked, "that if this plant is destroyed, it would not only annihilate all the Cubans in Miami but . . . radioactivity would fall on Cuba?"

5.

"MAN, we're strong and dangerous," Che Guevara gushed to the Cuban army magazine *Verde Olivo* in 1960. "Oh, it is so great and comfortable to belong to such a strong world power as dangerous as Cuba!" The political scientist Jorge Domínguez of Harvard found a way of putting it more elegantly two decades later, when he described Cuba as "a small country with a big country's foreign policy." It is this, in fact, not police-state socialism, which constitutes Castro's greatest political innovation, and to which he owes much of his appeal in the poorer, more wretched backwaters of the third world.

Cuba was always too small a stage for Castro's ambitions, and almost from the very start he attempted to project his presence onto the South American mainland. (Aspillaga recalls him fantasizing even as late as the mid-1980's about eventually becoming the President of "Latin America.") The vision of Cuba as a potential great power—however outlandish to foreigners—has deep roots in the island's political history; but without the economic, logistical, and political support of the Soviet Union, it could only have remained the daydream of a frustrated tropical politician.

With such support, however, Castro was able to leverage his way to quasi-great-power status. Geyer reminds us that at the height of Castro's "military globalism" in the early 1970's, an island with a population of eight million people had some 250,000 "internationalist fighters" deployed around the globe. (During the Ethiopian civil war, an entire Cuban expeditionary force was transported to Africa, there to fight under the command of a Soviet general.) In addition, Castro was sponsoring 27 active guerrilla organizations with 25,000 armed and trained members from other countries, backed up by an additional 20,000 from Africa and Nicaragua who had undergone political-indoctrination classes in Cuba. Havana became one of the two "polar centers" for guerrilla warfare in the world (the other being the Palestinian national movement in the Middle East).

Geyer is quite clear on just what all of this meant for international politics. Without Castro's advice and support

> there would have been no Nicaraguan Sandinistas, no [U.S.] invasion of Grenada, no guerrilla movements from El Salvador to Uruguay to Chile, no destruction of democracy in the Southern Cone [of South America], no Marxist Angola, Mozambique, or Ethiopia.
>
> There would have been no new political, ideological, and strategic balance of power in

* This is, in fact, precisely how Khrushchev justified his agreement with Kennedy to Castro in the remarkable correspondence which Castro released to the French press last year (see *Le Monde*, November 27, 1990). Henry Kissinger has frequently remarked that while he considered the outcome of the crisis a victory for the United States at the time, since then he has come to see the validity of Khrushchev's point.

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southern Africa, and no super-national "drug state," defended by the leftist guerrillas he had trained, spreading like an evil and consuming Rorschach blot across Latin America, with its own armies and borders.

There would have been no extension, for the first time, of Latin America's reach within the United States, no first and second Marxist-Leninist state in the Western hemisphere. From 1959 on, wherever the United States had a watershed foreign-policy crisis, Castro's formative hand could be found.

The motor of all of this was not Marxism as an ideology or the Soviet Union's strategic designs, crucial as both of those were to Castro's success. Rather, the foundation-stone of his career as a revolutionary in Cuba was *resentment*. "His was a politics not of interest," she writes, "but of complexes." He destroyed the old Cuba "not because the Americans turned their backs on him, but in order to avoid the wrenching feelings of inferiority, so as not to have to compete with a culture that was so unbearable exactly because the Cuban people *wanted* it."

Castro's foreign policy, then, was merely a projection of this attitude on a global scale: a military-political alliance with the other "losers" of history. Somewhere along the line, however, he lost sight of the fact that his global reach was almost entirely based on Soviet power and Moscow's willingness (and ability) to project it. In some ways this was entirely understandable: the Cuban dictator did not always follow the Kremlin's instructions, and sometimes rushed ahead of his patrons, forcing them to make good revolutionary accounts he had opened in strange and difficult places. As the Soviet defector Arkady Shevchenko later remarked, no client ever drew upon greater reserves of Moscow's patience than the Cubans. As long as strategic bipolarity was a fact of life, Castro could successfully manipulate his sponsor. But who needs him—or his country—now that it is not?

6.

More guns, at home and abroad, have meant, inevitably, less butter at home. In effect, Castro has consolidated his power at home and extended it overseas at the cost of huge sacrifices from his own people. The point is worth dwelling upon only because it is so far from what he explicitly promised Cubans at the beginning. In his famous speech in 1953 ("History Will Absolve Me"), delivered at his trial for having assaulted the Moncada Fortress, the future dictator claimed that "Cuba can support splendidly a population three times larger than it now has. . . . There is no reason . . . for the misery among its inhabitants. The market should be flooded with produce, pantries should be full, all hands should be industriously producing."

Today, however, Castro's Cuba is an object lesson not in progress but in regression. Far from becoming an independent industrial power in its own right, the island found itself unable even to produce enough *sugar*, and from 1983 on had to resort to the open market to meet its export quota to the Soviet Union. One Cuban who returned from exile in Spain several years ago found that literally nothing had changed—"the same crystal windows . . . the [same] baths. The iceboxes were from the time of Humphrey Bogart." In many other ways, too, the country is poorer than it has ever been. Instead of "markets . . . flooded with produce, pantries . . . full," the population survives at a virtual subsistence level, with every article of prime necessity sternly rationed.* A Cuban-American woman who recently visited her family there recalled one of her cousins saying, "Tell our relatives in the United States not to worry—we're fine here in Cuba; the only thing we lack is food and freedom." Suicide is now the principal cause of death of Cubans between the ages of 41 and 49—an affliction which, Geyer reminds us, has touched Castro's personal entourage twice (his close associate Haydée Santamaría, and his one-time puppet President Osvaldo Dórticos).

There were still—there are still—those who lamely defend this state of affairs either in terms of the American economic "blockade" (actually, a trade embargo restricted to the United States; it does not inhibit Castro from commercial transactions with most of the countries in the world, though his inability to pay his bills has made him a most unappealing customer), or the regime's supposed accomplishments in the area of education and health. Indeed, almost no report on the island these days fails to include a disclaimer of this sort: "No one in Cuba is starving or homeless," Lee Hockstadter assures readers of the Washington *Post* (February 6, 1991), "and free health care and education take the edge off the scarcity of some foods and consumer items."†

On the subject of health care, a rather different view comes from Dr. María Isabel González Betancourt, former chief of the Cuban national hospital system, who defected to Mexico last September. She reports that in Cuban hospitals many patients perish needlessly from post-operative infections because surgeons are unable to wash their hands with antiseptic soap or distilled water—both articles being virtually nonexistent; and that kidney patients are expiring because of a shortage

* The self-styled "Latin American socialist" Jacobo Timerman has just had the candor to observe that after 30 years Fidel "hasn't managed to organize a system for distributing bread and beer" (*Cuba: A Journey*, Knopf, 125 pp., $19.95).

† Hockstadter seems unfamiliar with Charles Lane's report (*New Republic*, January 7/14, 1991) that Castro's farm officials have taken to breeding a kind of rat that lives in the cane fields "as a source of food."

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of spare parts for dialysis machines. Perhaps even more interesting is this comment:

> It is not true that, as in Mexico, government hospitals provide their patients with medicine free of charge; in Cuba one receives prescriptions at the doctor's office, and the patient then has to go out and try to buy his medicine in the street. This is so because the public pharmacies are lacking about 320 basic drugs, including penicillin, which we in the hospital system had to do without for various weeks at a time.

As for education, to judge by some remarks made in the U.S. print (and particularly electronic) media, one would have thought that there were no schools at all in Cuba before 1959, whereas in fact for more than half a century before Castro's accession to power Havana was one of the two or three most important publishing, theatrical, and literary centers of the Spanish language. To be sure, there was a great disparity between city and countryside, but even so, Cuba ranked third or fourth among Latin Americans states in literacy. There is something slightly fraudulent about Castro's claims in this area, as attested to by none other than Jacobo Timerman, who writes that "if it is true that [today] every Cuban knows how to read and write, it is likewise true that every Cuban has nothing to read and must be very cautious about what he writes." And after twelve years of war in Africa, he adds, the Cuban experience there has not produced a single novel or poem "that goes beyond pamphleteering stupidity." Not a single major Cuban novelist continues to live on the island.

7.

How many times in this century have Marx's predictions been turned on their heads by events! First, the great revolution he expected began not in the industrialized countries of Western Europe but in the barbarous reaches of the East. Then it was brought westward not by rebellious workers but by tanks, bayonets, and police technology. Finally, it spread outward to the margins and periphery of the modern world in the wake of decolonization. Now, the center of what used to be called the "socialist world" is collapsing, crucially endangering the survival of its peripheral tributaries. Who could have imagined in 1848, or 1917, or 1945 that the final redoubt of Communism would be a tropical island in the Caribbean?

For such a system, there can be no easy end, no soft landing. When and how it will happen no one can say, but neither a generational extension (with Castro's son "Fidelito," who has suddenly emerged as heir-apparent) nor a gradual opening (either at home or in relations with the United States, or both) seems likely. In recent months Castro has repeatedly insisted that regardless of what takes place elsewhere, Cuba will carry forward the banner of Marxism to the very end. No doubt that as long as he is around to determine the course of events, Cuba's future will simply resemble its past. But over the longer term this claim is unlikely to withstand the larger currents of history, geography, and culture, all of which at last are converging to reduce the man and his country to a grotesque and unfortunate footnote.

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A Great 20th-Century Novelist

Menahem Milson

NAGUIB MAHFOUZ, the Egyptian novelist who in 1988 won the Nobel Prize in Literature, is a man of contradictions. Well-versed in Western culture, he has never visited Western Europe or America. The most famous modern Arab novelist, on whom more has been written than on any other Arab writer, he is a man about whom relatively little is known. Although his works are deeply rooted in the milieu of Cairo's lower and middle classes, in his writing he has conspicuously avoided the use of the language these classes speak. And perhaps the most amazing contradiction is this: while Mahfouz is the most popular writer in the Arab world, his political views differ radically from those held by the majority of Arab intellectuals.

NAGUIB MAHFOUZ was born on December 11, 1911, the youngest of seven children in a middle-class Muslim family which lived in a quarter of Cairo called Gamaliyya, part of the old section of the city whose roots go back to the 10th century. This traditional neighborhood, with its mosques, minarets, and bazaars, the most famous of which is the Khan al-Khalili, figures prominently in many of Mahfouz's works. In fact, Cairo, both old and new, is the locale of almost all of his novels and stories. For Mahfouz, Cairo is the universe.

It is a universe that has undergone many changes in his lifetime, political as well as social and cultural. At the time of Mahfouz's birth Egypt was still formally under the supreme sovereignty of the Ottoman sultan, although in fact it was a separate entity, having become virtually independent of Ottoman rule in the beginning of the 19th century under Muhammad 'Ali, and then falling under the control of Great Britain in 1882. Upon the outbreak of World War I, Egypt was declared a British protectorate; but by the end of the war, Egyptian nationalists under the charismatic leadership of Sa'd Zaghlul were clamoring for independence. When the British departed Zaghlul in February 1919, a rebellion broke out which eventually forced the British to grant partial independence; in 1922 the sultan Fu'ad (great-grandson of Muhammad 'Ali) declared himself king. The British continued, however, to exert much influence on Egyptian affairs and to maintain troops along the Suez Canal, until that residue of domination was finally removed by Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1956 when he nationalized the Canal and ordered the British out.

To Mahfouz, who was just a child at the time, the 1919 rebellion has remained the most crucial event in Egypt's modern history, and Sa'd Zaghlul its foremost hero. A faithful supporter of Zaghlul's party, the Wafd, Mahfouz never forgave Nasser for banning this and all other parties and for suspending parliamentary life.

Culturally, the Egypt in which Mahfouz grew up was a place that had become open to Western influence more than a century before his birth, in the wake of Napoleon's invasion of 1798. European cultural influence became especially conspicuous under Isma'il, Muhammad 'Ali's francophile grandson who in the late 19th century tried to turn Egypt into a province of Europe, and Cairo into another Paris. The Cairo opera house, modeled on the Paris Opera, was for a century (until it was ruined by fire in 1971) a monument to his relentless Westernizing zeal but also to the appalling gap between the Westernized upper crust and the masses.

Demographic change in Mahfouz's lifetime has been particularly dramatic. Before World World I, the population of Cairo was about three quarters of a million, of Egypt about eleven million. By the time Mahfouz was working on the Cairo trilogy around 1950, the city's population had tripled to over two million. It has grown constantly since then, due largely to a massive influx of people from the countryside, to become today an exploding megalopolis of fifteen million.

INFORMATION on the personal life of Mahfouz is rather scanty; what we know comes mostly from interviews he has given over the years as well as from his works, notably the Cairo trilogy.* In these three novels, the character of Kamal comes very close to being the alter ego of the author—as a child in the first volume, as a high-school student in the second volume, and as a bachelor in his late thirties in the third.

Mahfouz's father was a government official who after his retirement became an employee in a store

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* See the Note on p. 38 for works of Mahfouz available in English. For convenience's sake I cite his books here by their English titles even where these differ from the Arabic.

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in the old Gamaliyya quarter. His mother, who gave birth after a very difficult labor, named the child in honor of the obstetrician who delivered him. (Her account of that experience seems to have made a deep mark; difficult labors are described in a number of Mahfouz's stories.) When Mahfouz was ten years old he suffered from a neurological disease diagnosed at the time as epilepsy. Although he lost a year of school, he overcame the illness without any lasting damage. An outstanding student both in scientific subjects and in Arabic composition, he was also an excellent soccer player; many years later one of his classmates said that Mahfouz was the fastest player he had ever seen, and that "if he had chosen a career in football instead of writing, he would have become a national champion."

Already in his teens Mahfouz underwent two crises which affected him for life. At about fifteen he became infatuated with a girl a few years older than he, the daughter of one of the neighborhood's wealthy families. In an interview Mahfouz later reflected, "It was an experience devoid of any contact, due to the differences in age and social class." But this adolescent love made a very deep impression on his life and work. Many pages of the trilogy describe the excitement and anguish of the enraptured Kamal.

His religious crisis was also severe. Brought up in an observant atmosphere at home, and in the very traditional neighborhood of Gamaliyya, Mahfouz was terribly upset in school to learn that, contrary to popular belief, the head of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husayn was not buried in the mosque that was the center of religious activity in his neighborhood and the most highly revered shrine in Cairo. Then, while in high school, Mahfouz read about Darwin's theory of evolution; the experience shook the very basis of his belief, and the idea of evolution has in fact become the core of his social thought as well as of his understanding of the history of civilization.

Loss of faith and the desperate effort to recover it are recurrent themes in Mahfouz's work. They form the main concern of the allegorical novel *The Search* (1964) and of *The Beggar* (1965), the story of a successful lawyer who loses all interest in family and work and embarks on a quest for the ultimate meaning of life. In both books the search ends tragically, in one case in murder and execution, in the other in madness.

Against his father's will and his older brother's advice, Mahfouz as a university student chose neither medicine, engineering, nor law but rather philosophy. During his university years he became better acquainted with Western thought, both clasical and modern, and seems to have been influenced especially by Henri Bergson's philosophy of evolution and by the American pragmatists Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. While a student he also began writing short articles on philosophical subjects. In his first published work, an article entitled "The Passing Away of Old Beliefs and the Birth of New Beliefs" (1930), he argued that in the modern era religious faith was being replaced by new systems of belief, among them Communism and socialism. Yet socialism, whatever its attractions, would, he predicted, inevitably fail to fulfill its promise of an earthly paradise, while revolution would end up causing more harm than benefit. The suspicion with which, years later, Mahfouz viewed Nasser's revolution seems to have had its roots in these early attitudes.

Mahfouz graduated from the university in 1934 and was nominated for but failed to win a government scholarship to continue his studies abroad. He obtained instead a secretarial position in the university administration, then in 1939 a government post. Mahfouz remained a civil servant until his retirement in 1971, first in the Ministry of Culture where he served as chief censor of films, then as director of the department of cinematic art, and finally as a special adviser. Starting in 1936, he abandoned philosophy and gave himself over exclusively to fiction.

Even as a child Mahfouz had always been an avid reader. When he decided to become a writer he embarked on an intensive course in Western literature. He proceeded in a typically systematic way, preparing a reading list based on John Drinkwater's *The Outline of Literature*. Shakespeare, Dickens, Shaw, Ibsen, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Proust were all on his list; the non-English authors he read in English translation. Naturally he came to have his preferences: he does not especially like Balzac, Faulkner, or Hemingway (except for *The Old Man and the Sea*); he admires Melville, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy. Oddly, he does not like Dickens, to whom he is often compared. Shaw is a particular favorite, and he has a special place in his heart for Shakespeare. In recent years he has been reading as much as he can about the development of modern science and technology.

Two problems confronted Mahfouz as he embarked on his career as a writer. A gregarious man who recoiled from confrontation, he was troubled by the thought of acting as a social critic, of saying things people would not like to hear. The solution he hit on was to write allegorically, on more than one level of meaning. Allegory, indeed, proved especially useful under the oppressive political conditions in Egypt during the Nasser years of the 1950's and 60's. But allegory served not merely as a device for escaping harassment by the authorities, or even as a convenient way to avoid embarrassing social situations. Allegory has been Mahfouz's way of reading the world. For him, observed reality always contains a hidden, inner aspect; if his great desire as a young student of philosophy was to achieve certainty—"to understand the secret of being"—as a writer he found in allegory a way of approaching the same issue disencumbered of the need to arrive at theoretical solutions.

The second problem Mahfouz had to face was that of language. This, indeed, has been a vexing

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issue for every modern Arab writer. The reason is that Arabs speak in the particular dialect of their country or area, but they read and write literary Arabic, "the eloquent language" (*al-fusha*), the language of the Qur'an, of classical Arabic poetry, and of all serious literature. Spoken Arabic dialects vary greatly from one place to another, but all differ from literary Arabic, which is one and the same throughout the Arab world.

Certain conventional practices regarding the use of literary and colloquial Arabic have evolved in modern times. Newspapers, magazines, and news broadcasts are all in literary Arabic; only the captions of cartoons and jokes are colloquial. Serious theater is in literary Arabic, comic plays in colloquial. Movies, unless they are on historical subjects, are in colloquial Arabic.

For Arab writers of realistic fiction, the problem of language is especially acute. How to represent the mundane conversations of people who in reality speak in a colloquial dialect—and may well be illiterate to boot? Some novelists handle the problem by writing narrative in literary language and dialogue in colloquial; others choose literary Arabic exclusively. The latter is the path followed by Mahfouz, and he has been strikingly successful in representing in literary Arabic the speech of his characters, educated and illiterate alike.

If Mahfouz were a proponent of pan-Arabism, one could possibly construe his choice as a political statement—eliminating that which distinguishes Egyptians from other speakers of Arabic, stressing that which unites them. But Mahfouz has never been a supporter of pan-Arab nationalism; on the contrary, he has always firmly upheld the idea of a distinct Egyptian national identity. The primary reason for Mahfouz's decision lies elsewhere, in a particular quality of "eloquent" Arabic—namely, the notorious ambiguity of its vocabulary. This peculiarity, reflecting many centuries of semantic development, is regarded by some as a shortcoming, but for Mahfouz it has been a great advantage. Drawing freely on the wealth of cultural associations carried by literary Arabic (but absent in colloquial), he weaves a fabric whose texture suggests more than can be conveyed merely by narrative itself—a multivocal instrument for a multifaceted reality.

ALTHOUGH Mahfouz has made his name as a novelist, he began his literary career as a writer of short stories—not very successful ones. Many of these stories reflect a level of art markedly lower than that of the novels Mahfouz began to publish in 1939. But the stories also exhibit some of his special qualities as a narrator, as well as his unique capacity to convey complex human emotions in just a few words. The characters range from Turko-Egyptian aristocrats to lower- and middle-class Egyptians, students, prostitutes, the children of the poor. Most take place in contemporary Egypt, but some of the more philosophical tales are set in the ancient past.

Mahfouz's first three novels are likewise devoted to subjects derived from the age of the pharaohs but bearing on essentially modern concerns. His interest here was not so much historical as ideological, stemming from his concept of Egyptian national identity. Like other Westernized intellectuals of his time, Mahfouz considered that identity to be essentially neither Arab nor Islamic, but inherently and distinctly Egyptian, having its roots in the land and in the glorious civilization that had emerged from it. His first novel, *The Irony of Fate* (1939), a vehicle for Mahfouz's ideas on government, education, and moral behavior, is placed in the court of Khufu (Cheops), the pharaoh who ordered the building of the great pyramid of Giza, while in *The Struggle of Thebes* (1944), the conflicting attitude to the British, and to Western culture, held by modern-day Egyptians is reflected in the predicament of Mahfouz's hero, caught between duty to his people and his love for the fair-haired, blue-eyed daughter of the king of the Hyksos.

After these three historical novels Mahfouz abandoned his plan for a series of works tracing the history of Egypt from pharaonic to modern times and turned to the contemporary scene. Between 1945 and 1948 he published four novels describing various aspects of middle- and lower-middle-class life in Cairo and attentive to the political and cultural debates of the time. In one, *The New Cairo* (1945), the main characters are a prototypical group of students: an Islamic fundamentalist; a secularist/socialist; a supporter of the Wafd (the popular national party which, as already noted, Mahfouz himself has loyally supported ever since high school); and a cynical careerist who does not care about any ideal. *Khan al-khalili* (1946, not translated into English), which takes place during the early years of World War II in the Gamaliyya quarter where Mahfouz was born, chronicles the rivalry between a Communist and a hapless low-ranking official who is a proponent of cultural conservatism.

In 1949 Mahfouz published *The Beginning and the End*, the story of a Cairene family of the lower middle class whose father dies, leaving behind four children. The youngest of the three sons, an ambitious and vain character, enters the military academy in 1936—this was the same entering class, the first to be open to non-members of the Egyptian aristocracy, which as a matter of historical fact included Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and other future leaders of the Free Officers. Mahfouz's negative judgment on this character—the novel ends with his suicide—anticipates his view of the military men who would lead the revolution of 1952.

But the strongest character in the novel is the mother, who withstands all the troubles and hardships life brings and, like the land of Egypt to which she is compared, remains "silent, patient, and good." This contrast between men and women runs through many of Mahfouz's books, whose male characters tend to be selfish, arrogant, vain, debauched, or utterly confused and lacking a sense of purpose in life, while the women often serve

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as models of selfless devotion to family and of perseverance, "the quality which makes it possible to endure life."

JUXTAPOSITION of mother and father is most conspicuous in Mahfouz's major novelistic achievement, the Cairo trilogy, on which he worked for seven years and which he completed in the spring of 1952. ("This is not a novel, it's a calamity," said his publisher on seeing the size of it.) First published in installments in a literary magazine, the book was eventually brought out in three separate volumes: *Palace Walk* (1956), *Palace of Desire* (1957), and *The Sugar Bowl* (1957).

The story traces three generations of a Cairo family over the period 1917-44, giving a detailed picture of middle-class existence and a dynamic account of Egypt's major political and social developments. Against a background of home, bazaar, café, office, brothel, university, Mahfouz treats a multitude of subjects: Egyptian nationalism, family relations, love, the place of the writer in society, secular positivism versus religious faith, socialism versus Islamic fundamentalism.

The father, Sayyid Ahmad, the epitome of manliness and the very model of a traditional Muslim patriarch, is absolute ruler of his family and does not permit his wife or children to question his opinions and decisions. But while he imposes on his family an extremely strict code of behavior, he regularly spends the night drinking and merrymaking with his friends in the company of women of pleasure. It is the mother, meek and submissive, who wins the love of her children, the respect of the neighbors, and the sympathy of the reader. Kamal, her indulged youngest, grows up to become an introverted and insecure man, emotionally paralyzed by (as he sees it) the struggle between his two selves: the "human," or idealistic self, the self that is interested in philosophy, and the "animal" who satisfies his desires by regular visits to brothels. On another level, he is also torn by an inner conflict between the pull of traditional indigenous culture and the imported attractions of modernity.

The Cairo trilogy established Mahfouz deservedly and uncontestably as the foremost Egyptian, indeed the foremost Arab, novelist. Taha Husayn, the dean of modern Arabic literature, greeted the work as "the greatest accomplishment in the field of the novel in the Arabic language in modern times," and one which "stands well in comparison with any of the great novels in world literature." With his reputation established, it was widely expected that Mahfouz would turn next to the new reality created after 1952 by the revolution of the Free Officers. But for a number of years he confined himself to film scripts, finally breaking his literary silence in 1959 with the publication of *Children of Gebelawi*. This book marked a break from the realistic mode. In the guise of a story about an old Cairo neighborhood, Mahfouz spins a tale of humanity under the aegis of the three great monotheistic religions and comments on the relations among science, religion, and political power. *Children of Gebelawi* has not been permitted to appear in Egypt in book form; it outraged Cairo's religious circles, and also touched a political nerve with its allegorical representation of the Free Officers as club-wielding thugs who brutally oppress the people.

In 1961 Mahfouz published *The Thief and the Dogs*, a milestone in the development of his own art and in modern Arabic fiction. Introducing to Arabic readers the existentialist themes of alienation, despair, loss of meaning, it also introduced the hitherto unfamiliar narrative technique of stream of consciousness. (In political content, too, this book was a powerful expression of disenchantment with the 1952 revolution.) *The Thief and the Dogs* was followed by a series of other short novels, similar in style and featuring characters similarly alienated, lonesome, forlorn. They include *Autumn Quail* (1962), *The Search* (1964), *The Beggar* (1965), *Miramar* (1967), *Respected Sir* (1974), and *Wedding Song* (1981). Between 1961 and 1981 Mahfouz produced 24 books: 14 novels, 9 collections of short stories, and a volume of sketches. Of them all, *The Thief and the Dogs*, reminiscent in some ways both of the Hemingway of *The Old Man and the Sea* and the Camus of *The Stranger*, remains the most powerful.

WHEN the Nobel Prize to Mahfouz was announced in October 1988, a wave of joy swept through the Arab world. In Egypt the celebration was particularly intense, for the Swedish Academy's choice reaffirmed something Egyptians had known for decades. But the event did not pass without controversy. Amid the general acclaim for Mahfouz's triumph, some accused the Nobel committee of awarding the prize on the basis of politics rather than literary merit.

As we have seen, Mahfouz has never been an admirer of Nasser's revolution or autocratic regime. During Nasser's lifetime he voiced his criticisms in a covert manner, usually by means of allegory; later, after Nasser's death, more explicitly. To many Arab intellectuals, the position taken by Mahfouz toward this hero who defied the West and achieved national glory for the Arabs amounts to sacrilege. And compounding the sin is the fact that for a very long time Mahfouz has openly and unequivocally supported the idea of peace with Israel.

Some three years before President Sadat went to Jerusalem in 1977, Mahfouz expressed the view that the time had come for the Arabs to negotiate peace with Israel; after Sadat's initiative, he took a firm stand in support of the Egyptian president. Even in the aftermath of Israel's 1982 war in Lebanon he did not change his attitude. In an interview which he gave to an Arab paper in 1984, and which was suppressed for two years, Mahfouz went so far as to say that military actions taken by Israel were necessitated by the fact that the Arab states had refused to make peace.

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Thus, it is not surprising that many Arab and Egyptian intellectuals, while congratulating Mahfouz on the Nobel Prize in 1988, issued a caveat that this did not indicate an endorsement of his political views. As for Mahfouz himself, he has been nothing daunted by their criticism. When asked about the possiblity that the Nobel Prize committee might have had considerations in mind other than the excellence of his work, he replied:

> The Nobel Prize is granted by a Western nation and it is only natural that they cherish the values of their culture. Hence, when they grant the prize, they understandably prefer writers who cherish the same values. . . . I do cherish the best of the values of Western culture, primarily freedom.*

For some 60 years now, Naguib Mahfouz has been observing Egyptian society, recording what he sees in 52 volumes of novels, stories, and short plays, besides many screenplays. Without ever losing touch with Egyptian reality, on which his work provides a long-term running commentary, he has created an enduring and often exquisite body of art. No less valuably, he has brought into Arabic literature a whole variety of new narrative forms, borrowed from Western models but exploiting the full resources of the Arabic literary tradition, and in this way has helped make possible the renewal of Arabic writing in our time.

An eminent Egyptian critic, Raja' al-Naqqash, recently summed up Mahfouz's achievement:

> Even if you read hundreds of books on Egyptian history and politics, you cannot understand Egypt unless you read Naguib Mahfouz. Naguib Mahfouz gives you the real taste of Egypt. He puts the keys to understanding the Egyptian personality into your hands, and then leads you into the hidden chambers of the authentic Egyptian spirit.

This is a true judgment, as true of Mahfouz and Egypt as a similar judgment would be of William Faulkner and Mississippi, or of Isaac Bashevis Singer and the inner world of Eastern European Jewry. And it is also true that Naguib Mahfouz ranks with these writers as among the great novelists of our century.

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* Another source of tension, in different circles, has been Mahfouz's attitude toward Islam. This came to the fore with *Children of Gebelawi* in 1959, and was raised again in connection with the Salman Rushdie affair. When, a couple of months after Mahfouz received the Nobel Prize, the death penalty was pronounced on Rushdie by the Ayatollah Khomeini, Mahfouz spoke out clearly in support of Rushdie's right to express his views. (He also said he found *The Satanic Verses* appallingly offensive.) This triggered an angry response on the part of Islamic fundamentalists in Egypt, one of whose leaders pronounced the death penalty against Mahfouz himself.

Note

Over the last few years a number of Naguib Mahfouz's most important works have been issued, or reissued, in English translation by Doubleday/Anchor Books. These include:

Palace Walk (The Cairo Trilogy I), translated by William Maynard Hutchins and Olive E. Kenny, 512 pp., $22.95; Anchor paperback $9.95.

Palace of Desire (The Cairo Trilogy II), translated by William Maynard Hutchins, Lorne M. Kenny, and Olive E. Kenny, 432 pp., $22.95.

The Beginning and the End, translated by Ramses Awad, edited by Mason Rossiter Smith, 416 pp., $19.95; Anchor paperback $9.95.

Wedding Song, translated by Olive E. Kenny, edited and revised by Mursi Saad El Din and John Rodenbeck, 112 pp., $16.95; Anchor paperback $7.95.

The Thief and the Dogs, translated by Trevor Le Gassick and M.M. Badawi, revised by John Rodenbeck, 128 pp., $16.95; Anchor paperback $7.95.

Autumn Quail, translated by Roger Allen, revised by John Rodenbeck, 176 pp., $19.95; Anchor paperback $7.95.

The Beggar, translated by Kristin W. Henry, 144 pp., $17.95; Anchor paperback $7.95.

Respected Sir, translated by Rasheed El-Enany, 208 pp., $19.95; Anchor paperback $7.95.

The Time and the Place and Other Stories, selected and translated by Denys Johnson-Davies, 192 pp., $19.50.

In addition, there are *Children of Gebelawi*, translated by Philip Stewart, Three Continents, 355 pp., $12.00 (paperback); a short-story collection, *God's World*, translated by Akef Abbadir and Roger Allen, Bibliotheca Islamica, $12.00; and a collection of sketches, *Mirrors*, translated by Roger Allen, Bibliotheca Islamica, $12.00.

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Rabbinical Eyes

A Story

Rebecca Goldstein

We moved around a lot when I was a kid. My father was a very unsuccessful rabbi. His contracts were never for more than three years, and, even though the positions were in cities considered very undesirable—way out in the hinterlands, far from any large Jewish community—the congregations rarely renewed him.

My father had a very heavy European accent, which, together with the remote air of a scholar, made him a ludicrously unsuitable candidate for the American pulpit. The main point of an American rabbi is the Saturday morning sermon, ideally delivered in that oily style congregations require from their clergy, lubricating the hard little pellet of religion so that it slides in with minimum pain. Learned though my father was—and he is of the high scholarly caliber that is called in his culture a *talmid khokhem*, literally a "disciple of the wise"—you couldn't understand a word he said. Or so I learned—very early and very very bitterly—from overhearing the sneers and stifled groans of his congregants.

I was around six years old when I came upon a group of men, a group my father referred to, with a resigned shrug, as the kibitzers, huddled together, out in the hallway during one of his sermons. Every community in which we lived—this one happened to be in Omaha, Nebraska—had its kibitzers, men who came to the synagogue strictly for purposes of socializing. When the socializers were women, they were called, with neither more nor less contempt, yentas.

The Nebraska version of kibitzers were going around the circle, taking turns imitating my father's accent. It was my primal scene of devastation.

One of the sports spotted me, signaling the others, who immediately all fell into an embarrassed hush, having the decency to look terribly shamefaced before the rabbi's little daughter.

I count that moment as among the three or four most painful in my life. Its memory burned in me, night after sleepless night, for a very long time. Within the family my father was such a figure of honor, a *talmid khokhem*, whose every request and requirement were treated with reverent respect. The discovery that outside the family he was only a little man with a comical accent was a contradiction I spent my early life trying to resolve.

The amazing thing is that to me it had always seemed that my father had no accent at all.

The various communities we lived in were always very sorry to see the *rebbetzin*, my mother, leave. My mother, who is American-born, is also very learned. She used to study Talmud as a girl every *Shabbes* afternoon with her rabbinical father, just as I did. Sometimes she and my father still learn a page together.

Legend says that when a pious woman dies and goes to heaven she will get to be the footstool of her husband, as he sits in Torah study. My mother is almost a good foot taller than my father. My mother is also beautiful, with features that can accurately be described as chiseled. And whenever my father looks up at my mother, it's as if he is watching her emerging from the sea, standing poised on a cushion of foam.

My mother always taught in the Sunday schools of the synagogues that employed my father, and she was a rare teacher, managing to get the kids, who were of course seething with resentment at having to go to school on Sundays, almost to like being there. She taught them something, too, trying most to infuse them with a sense of their history. She's a very charming person, so interested in everyone's story, always managing to make good friends wherever we went.

My mother was my father's greatest asset, everyone said so, though not even she could overcome the effect of the accent that sounded like a comedian's bad joke, and of my father's impenetrably standoffish manner. Maybe if he were a taller man, or spoke beautiful English, he could have carried off what appeared like such misplaced arrogance, a refugee's ridiculous insistence on the dignity and honor of his position, as if he were one of God's chosen ones.

I knew what must have seemed to his congregants to be intransigence and arrogance wasn't at all personal. My father is personally a very modest

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and reasonable man. But he was the rabbi—the Rabbi! He was the sole representative of Torah learning among these tragically ignorant Jews. He wasn't arrogant for himself, but for what he carried with him, the learning and the history, out into those hinterlands.

I know that my mother, and I think this is also true of my brother, Gideon, never got a glimpse of how my father looked to those outside the family, what a caricature he cut out there. But I could never get away from the terrible double-vision of my father. And, because I loved him more than anyone in the world, the double-vision of him was very troubling.

MY FATHER had been a student at the famous Telz Yeshiva in Telsiai, Lithuania. The yeshiva had accepted my father into the highest class—the top *shiur*—at the unusually young age of fifteen. He was learning there with men who were twice his age. He was giving his own *shiurim* to men who already had children of their own.

I learned this from my mother, who, if she learned it from my father, must have learned it very indirectly.

Lithuania was the country most renowned by European Jewry for the quality of its scholarship, and Telz was renowned throughout Lithuania. The "way of Telz" placed great emphasis on rationality, on the logical analysis of the text of Talmud. Lithuania was the center of the *misnagdim*—literally "those who are against," in this case against the mystical approach to Judaism known as Hasidism. Hasidism had been a grass-roots movement, growing up among the Polish uneducated, in part a rebellion against the rabbinical scholarly elite, who equated spirituality with talmudic learning. Hasidim don't study their way closer to God, but rather sing and dance their way to Him. The scholars of Lithuania responded to Hasidism with little patience, following the implacable position taken by the great Rabbi Elijah Zalman, the "Vilna Gaon," the legendary talmudic genius of the 18th century, whose influence was felt in the yeshivas of Lithuania even into my father's day.

My father's first name is Zalman, and somehow I thought, probably from wishful thinking, through much of my childhood, that the Vilna Gaon had been one of our Lithuanian relatives.

At Telz they didn't train you to be a pulpit rabbi. I doubt that the concept even existed over there. My father was trained to give *shiurim*, not sermons. He was trained in the *pilpul*—the argumentation—of the Talmud, not the politics of the temple. He had ended up in America, at one pulpit after another, because of Hitler and all the rest of it.

He was the only survivor of his family, who had all been living in some Lithuanian town whose name I don't know, but where my grandfather was the rabbi, my uncles—my father was the youngest of seven sons, born to a second wife and ten years younger than the next eldest—in various positions of authority and honor. The Sonauers had been the leading family in the Jewish life of this town for generations. I don't know terribly much about it, but I do know that my father was at Telz when the Nazis marched into his town, and that all his family were herded together and locked in the synagogue, which was then torched.

Telsiai was never occupied by the Nazis, but was taken over by the Russians during the war. They confiscated the yeshiva building, and the students were scattered among various Lithuanian towns. A few teachers and students managed to reach the United States, among them, of course, my father.

My father and I look alike to an extraordinary degree, because we both have the same eyes, and these eyes of ours completely dominate our faces. These eyes are huge. They make every expression that crosses our face a sad one. They are deep-socketed, heavy-lidded, and very darkly shadowed, the area around them looking almost bruised. Their color is brown.

On the wall above the sideboard in the dining room of whatever house we were occupying, there was always hung an old silver-framed photograph, maybe six by eight, of my father's family, taken outside in a garden on a summer's day. My father had had this picture with him at Telz. There are 42 Sonauers indistinctly captured in the photograph, counting the children sitting cross-legged in front. My father's six brothers stand in the back, their bewigged wives arranged in front of them. One of my uncles was already a grandfather at the time the picture was taken. His daughter stands near his wife, with the baby in her arms. And in the center sit my grandmother and grandfather, the matriarch and patriarch, she with a rather elaborately coiled wig, he with a raised black skullcap and a long white beard. Nobody, not even the littlest child, smiles. Everyone looks at the camera with an air of studied seriousness.

Whatever gene it is that carries the trait for my father's and my eyes must be a dominant one. For there they were, in the picture of that old family gathering in Lithuania: pairs and pairs and pairs of them. Almost all of those people who were burned in the synagogue looked exactly like me.

My mother had a word for these eyes. Rabbinical eyes, she called them. And it was as much for these rabbinical eyes as for his reputation as a *talmid khokhem* that my mother, who was American-born and learned, tall and beautiful, immediately agreed when the young rabbi from Lithuania was suggested to her. She always told me this story when I came complaining to her about how ugly I was, how pathetically puny and sickly looking and different from any child I had ever seen—outside the silver-framed photograph.

"Ugly?" she'd smile at me. "How can you say

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that, Rochele? With such beautiful eyes. You have the rabbinical eyes of all your sainted ancestors of blessed memory."

I think my mother really thought that her words would make me love my eyes, love my haunted little face in the way that she did, for all the ghosts that lay behind it. But it doesn't take a doctorate in child psychology to understand why it was that my mother's words didn't help me much; that I walked away from them feeling not only an ugly child but a very bad one as well.

My brother, Gideon, by the way, did not inherit the rabbinical eyes. Gideon was lucky enough to be a child who looked like a child, healthy and American-born.

Of course, I have to admit now—I didn't realize it back then—that as a consequence of the pathos that people read into my face I tended to get away with a lot more than I otherwise would. I grew up in the 50's, in the shadow of the Holocaust. I was usually the only Jewish kid in my class—and with *such* a face I stirred up thoughts and feelings that allowed people to put up with a high degree of aggressive behavior on my part, what the professionals nowadays would call "acting out."

MY MOTHER'S family was also connected with the Telz Yeshiva, only the American branch, which is located in Cleveland, Ohio, to which my father eventually made his way. My mother's father was one of the teachers there, her mother one of the leading forces behind the creation of the girls' secondary school. It was a family that very much believed in educating its daughters.

I was born in Cleveland, but we moved to Charleston, South Carolina, my father's first pulpit position, when I was a few months old. From there we went to Shreveport, Louisiana, where we stayed until I was three and a half, and where Gideon was born. The next place was Savannah, Georgia, which is where my memories start to get distinct, and which we left when I turned six. I started first grade in Omaha, Nebraska, and second grade in Port Jervis, New York. When I was in the fourth grade we moved to Trenton, New Jersey, and we managed to hang on there until I graduated from elementary school.

I remember the anxiety of those first days in new schools, trying to pick out the competition for "smartest kid in the class." It wasn't hard. By the time I left to go home for lunch—I think in all those places you got to go home for lunch—I knew whom I'd have to do better than.

In Savannah it was a little girl called Cindy Wallquist, who was the only other kid who started kindergarten knowing how to read. But Cindy was just a minor event, since kindergarten was almost all fun and games. And anyway it was clear that Cindy was mostly just creatively guessing.

Omaha is where it started getting serious, or would have, had the competition been any tougher than little Daisy Dover, who happened to be a minister's daughter, and the next smartest kid, after the rabbi's daughter. In math there was just no contest at all.

I can't even remember who it was in Port Jervis. There was a chunky kid called Ira Fistover, who was reasonably smart.

Trenton is where it began to get a little interesting. Trenton was where Frederick Freudenstein—known, predictably enough, as "Freddy Frankenstein"—had been reigning unchallenged, not just as class genius, but as school genius.

He was a marvel to look at, Freddy was. I couldn't believe it when I saw him: just the classic picture of the egghead, straight out of a comic book, with his thick glasses, domed forehead, and affectless monotone. When I first saw him I figured his reputation might be based on nothing more substantial than his resemblance to the Professor Peabody character from the *Bullwinkle* cartoon show. But it wasn't. I think I had pretty much established that by lunchtime of that first day. Freddy Frankenstein worked away at his own sixth-grade math book while the rest of us were given review work from the third grade.

Tears of humiliation and rage blurred the long columns of tedious addition. There was no way I was going to allow Freddy Frankenstein the uniqueness of supremacy and be grouped with the indistinguishable others.

Freddy made the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades really interesting for me, and we two made it interesting for everyone else. Even the kids in the upper grades learned of our fierce competition. The teachers set up special reading and math groups for us, gave us all sorts of special assignments. We were excused all through fifth and sixth grades from attending science class, and instead embarked on a series of unsupervised experiments in a makeshift laboratory at the back of the room.

Kids envied us. Kids actually admired us for being smart. Perhaps it had to do with the way the teachers reacted to us. They were pretty clever, the way they used Freddy and me.

I liked Freddy, and he liked me. My father called Freddy my *khavrusa*, my study partner, and told me that a good *khavrusa* is a gift from God. Freddy once told me that it had been sort of tough for him before I came. Freddy Frankenstein had been a freak before I came. My arrival changed it all around, he said, turned him into a player in what became a school-wide game.

Of course, I could have told him much the same. I really couldn't believe that this was happening to me, that I was having so much fun, that everybody knew my name, said "Hi" to me when I passed. I remember wanting to say something like that to Freddy, to let him know that he had made a big difference to me also. Maybe I could do it with a pun on goon and *gaon*, genius.

But even this smelled too much of sentiment.

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Words of sentiment always end up sticking in my throat. Anyway, he wouldn't have known what a *gaon* was.

Freddy and I competed like crazy, especially in that math group. In the sixth grade the teacher simply gave us a tenth-grade geometry book, and told us to go it alone. We did, Freddy and I, each of us intent on getting the answer before the other.

Trenton was the first and only place I was sorry to leave. Being the smartest kid in the class was never the same again.

My brother, Gideon, two and a half years younger than me, developed his own way of coping with all the moves my family made. Gideon had this incredible knack for making friends. It was a kind of genius in him that left me baffled. I always had to wait for him after school, when he'd finally emerge from the building, always in the center of a group of kids. He was very athletic, which certainly helped. And he had my mother's good looks, too. But it was more than that, though what it was I never could figure out. I just couldn't see how people hooked in so quickly, so automatically, to the fact that Gideon was genuinely lovable. Even the very first day at each new school I'd see him coming out in the center of an easy, laughing group of brand new best friends.

My brother was smart, good in school, but nothing like me, which left me free to adore him, just like the rest of the world.

I say "my father," "my mother," "my brother." I wonder if they ever say "my daughter," if Gideon ever says "my sister." I was disowned by them all two years ago, when I married Luke, who is a Gentile. My father, my mother, and my brother sat *shiva* for me, as if I were dead.

The funny thing is that, looking back, I think I probably fell in love with Luke because he reminded me, in some convoluted way, of my father. I had never fallen in love before, hadn't even come close.

I was at Harvard Law School when I met Luke. I was taking a special enrichment seminar they were offering to first-year law students, on legal writing. It was an innovation at the law school, allowing a student some practical training. We were working on drafting contracts for opposing parties with conflicting interests. Basically the point of the exercise was to write a contract that completely protected your own interests, while leaving you as free as possible to demolish the other guy's.

Never since the days of Freddy Frankenstein had my talents in the classroom been quite so applauded as in that seminar on legal writing. My contracts, so deviously subtle, became legends. Everybody asked to read them, to study them, including this guy, Luke McClean—Clean Luke, of course, who looked to me like the very picture of a minister's son.

Clean Luke was having a lot of trouble getting the hang of writing a good contract, and kept asking to study mine. Just to be polite I asked to read one of his. I was as lost in wonder, reading Luke's contract, as he had been in reading mine.

The thought occurred to me that here was a guy who didn't have a clue how to protect his own interests while shafting someone else's. I doubt that this alone made me fall in love with him, but it's hard for me to say. I was in love with Luke a long time before I knew I was in love with Luke.

Clean Luke was older than the rest of us brash young things at Harvard Law School. (I was the brashest, and the youngest, only twenty.) Unlike the rest of us, so flushed with success, he was at Harvard having already tasted of failure. Law was going to be his second career. His first had been as an assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Nebraska. He hadn't gotten tenure.

I had majored in philosophy as an undergraduate at Harvard, but always with the intention of going to law school. The training in analytic reasoning is a good preparation for the law. Just about everybody in my philosophy classes was there with the same idea.

But Luke told me he had been really serious about philosophy. He was an ethicist. He had written a book on how to derive "ought" from "is."

Good God, I thought, a philosopher at law school. An ethicist at Harvard—God help him.

I remembered a stupid joke about the Yiddish word *farblondjet*, which means lost. The definition of *farblondjet*, went the dumb joke, is a kosher butcher in North Dakota. (Not even my family had ever lived in North Dakota.) Well, now I had a new definition: an ethicist at Harvard Law School.

Luke had taken his denial of tenure very hard, and had tried to hang on in philosophy, accepting a series of terminal positions before finally giving up and applying to law school.

"Hey," I said, holding in my hand his latest try at a tough contract, as he told me how he had come to be sitting here, in this seminar on legal writing, for which he showed so little aptitude. "Don't talk of Harvard as if it's total defeat. Harvard's not so bad as compensation. You'd be surprised how many people are really quite pleased to get into here."

"Well, I got in," said Luke lugubriously. "But I don't know if I'm going to make it through here. I have serious doubts that I was meant to be a lawyer."

Boy, so did I. In fact, when I first read one of his contracts I thought that the guy must be stupid. He isn't. Luke is one of the smartest people I know, in his own special way. It's just that his own special way doesn't include any of the strains of intelligence that are likely to show up in the courses you take in law school. He's a slow, ponderous, deep thinker, who questions the mean-

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ing of everything. He really *is*—God help him—a philosopher. He's also a creature of unusually generous impulses, which also didn't help him in law school.

"Well, think of it this way. If you had gotten tenure, you'd still be in Nebraska."

"That's exactly where I want to be. I like Nebraska. Hell, I grew up in Omaha."

"You did? Say, you wouldn't happen to know a girl named Daisy Dover, would you? A minister's daughter?"

I was fishing, trying out my hunch that Clean Luke was a minister's son.

"No," he had smiled back at me. "Can't say that I do. We McCleans aren't really a church-going clan."

Oh well, so much for my hunches. I'm a creature of analytic reasoning, not intuition.

"So who's this Daisy Dover?"

"Oh, just a little girl I went to first grade with. I went to first grade in Omaha."

"You did?" Damn but he looked like a minister's son when he grinned like that. Somewhere down that fallen-away line of McCleans I'd bet you anything there'd once been a clergyman. "First grade, huh? What about the second grade?"

"Second grade was in Port Jervis, New York. Kindergarten, in case you're getting ready to ask, was in Savannah, Georgia."

"Army brat?" he had asked me, trying out a hunch of his own that was so off-base it made me laugh out loud. I had to stifle my laughter quickly, as I realized our professor had entered and was staring at the seminar with that slightly injured look with which he always began. Professor Flew might also have been, for all I knew, a man whose arrogance wasn't of the personal variety, but merely a matter of the dignity of his position. But toy with that arrogance, in any way, and Professor Flew could turn decidedly nasty.

"Rabbinical brat." I quickly whispered back to Luke.

He looked baffled for a few seconds. Then he whispered, "Your father's a rabbi?"

I nodded.

"That's really interesting. You've got to tell me all about it."

I wondered a bit through the seminar as to why I had to tell him all about it. What was so goddamned interesting to Clean Luke of the non-churchgoing McCleans about my father's being a rabbi?

We went for coffee after class, and I discovered that Luke was a Jew-freak. A Semitophile, a term I had to coin, as there obviously hadn't been a very large demand for such a concept.

Luke's Semitophilia at first made me bristle with hostility. It seemed to me something very near to its virulent opposite. Any fixation on Jews puts me on edge.

I argued with him over coffee that there was just nothing very interesting about Jews. The most interesting thing about Jews was everyone's totally groundless belief that there was something interesting about Jews.

"I hate to disappoint you, but there's really no basis to the mystique. If I were you, I'd just stop thinking about it."

"You've got to be kidding," he had argued with me at first. "You're going to tell me that there's nothing interesting about a group that constitutes maybe one-third of 1 percent of the world's population and has garnered maybe about a sixth of the total Nobel Prizes in science and literature?"

Oh, yuck. How I hated this stuff. Who goes around tabulating the percentage of Jewish Nobel Prize laureates, anyway?

"Hey Luke, I don't trust your 'maybe' statistics. Or better, I don't trust the inference you seem to be making from them. Have you ever studied probability theory? There are some results there that can seem really amazing. Did you know that the probability of any two people having the same birthday in a group of 23 is as high as a half? You might think there was something mystical and miraculous going on if you kept discovering two people with the same birthdays, that is, unless you understood the mathematics."

I was trying to end this thing as gracefully as I knew how.

"So you really think there's nothing different about the Jews? I would think it would make you proud. It would me."

"Oh, you think so, do you?" My tone took a turn for the worse. "Well, in my opinion your admiration is a very close cousin to a view widely popularized by a certain housepainter from Austria."

Luke had blushed beet-red at this, looking more than ever like a minister's son. He sort of tilted back in his chair, as if he were being blown backward by the blast of my insult.

I looked at his scarlet face and immediately repented.

"Boy," he said, a little shakily. "I just hope I never come up against you in a courtroom. You really are going to make a hell of a prosecuting attorney."

"Look, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. It was unfounded and unforgivable. It's just that it's . . . well, it's a touchy subject for me."

"I sort of caught on to that," he had smiled.

What a nice guy! What a genuinely nice guy. Anyone else would have popped me one after an all-out attack like that. I was getting a little old for acting out. What was I trying to do, prove my thesis that the Jew-lover is easily transmuted into the Jew-hater by making Clean Luke hate my guts?

"Listen, Luke, I'm really *really* sorry. . . ."

"It's okay. I promise not to admire your heritage

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anymore. Do I have your permission to admire your legal brilliance?"

"Yeah, sure, go right ahead. No objection raised here to having my brilliance admired."

"I bet there's not. And listen, is it okay with you if I go on loving Isaac Bashevis Singer? You're not going to accuse me of being a neo-Nazi for that, are you?"

It was okay. I deserved that. I'd just take it sweetly, lying down.

"I'm sure it's just fine for you to like Isaac Bashevis Singer. I'm sure your reasons for doing so are of the purest."

"You like him too, right?"

This guy had a way of setting up assumptions it was a rare pleasure for me to knock down.

"No, I'm not really one for fiction."

"Oh." He seemed disappointed. Just set them up again, sweetie pie, and let me have a go.

"But I have read a few of his stories. I can't say that they grabbed me."

"Really?"

"They're awfully bizarre."

"Really? To you?"

"Yeah. In fact, I'd say, especially to me. See I told you, we're not just some mystically bonded tribe dispersed throughout the nations of the world. We're not the same metaphysical idea being thought in the mind of the same Jewish God. We find each other strange, too. Singer's world is unintelligible to me. All that supernatural stuff, the spooks and goblins. . . ."

"Dybbuks," Luke had corrected me.

"Well, I hate to disappoint you again, but where I come from there aren't any dybbuks, and there aren't any dopes who believe in them either. My family, which happens to be Orthodox, is as far from believing in dybbuks as in Santa Claus. My family's faith is a matter of logic."

He smiled, maybe as if I were a student in his philosophy class. I suddenly remembered he had been a professor. But I had never been much awed by my professors.

"Is faith ever a matter of logic?" he asked, just *like* a philosophy professor. "If it's all a matter of logic, where's the room for faith?"

I shrugged my shoulders. How could I begin to explain to this guy, who was obviously very taken by the picturesque backwardness of those quaint Jews of Poland, about the way of Telz?

"I think we have a different interpretation of the word 'faith,'" I told him, in such a way as effectively to terminate, or so I hoped, our theological chitchat.

It didn't. Luke pressed on.

"That's really interesting to me, what you say. The contrast between your Judaism and Singer's. You have to explain all this to me."

Again, I wondered exactly why I had to explain all this to him. But I simply satisfied myself by putting forth a disclaimer, to the effect that it wasn't *my* Judaism at all; I had pretty much left all that behind me.

"Oh?" Again Luke seemed disappointed. For a non-churchgoing McClean he sure wanted his Jews to be true to *their* faith, an observation I would normally have shared with him; but I was still holding my tongue, in the meek posture of penance.

"I saw Singer once in person," Luke went on. "Right after he got the Nobel Prize. He gave a reading in Omaha."

"Lucky Omaha," I muttered.

"Yes, lucky Omaha, though I register your sarcasm, and think it very little becomes you."

He said this in a way that made me remember again that he had been a professor when I was in junior high, and that he was at least a full ten years older than I was. I tended to forget this because in our present context, by which I mean Harvard Law School, I was his natural superior.

"It was a great experience. Singer was brilliantly funny when it came to answering questions. I remember his saying something like that Yiddish, which logically should be dead, is the perfect language for the Jewish experience, which has always reveled in illogic. Sorry, that's what the man said. And his accent was so wonderful, so perfect for the story. It was 'Gimpel the Fool,' do you know it?"

"I certainly don't *know* it. Maybe I read it."

"I'm going to tell you, though you don't deserve it, something amazing that happened when Singer came to Omaha. I was very good friends with a girl there, whose parents are pretty prominent in Jewish affairs, though they aren't at all what *you'd* call religious."

How the hell did this guy know what *I'd* call religious?

"They were just very charitable, charitable people. Very wealthy. Anyway, they were the ones who picked Singer up from the airport, Malise's father did, and then Singer came to their home for a short time before going on to his reading."

"Yes?" I, still penitent, encouraged him in the pause.

"Now Malise's mother, Sandra, is one of the most dynamic, vibrant people I know. She's chairperson of this organization, fund raiser for that one. Just an absolutely irresistible go-getter. In fact, I happened to meet Malise through her mother, when I was doing some work for the United Jewish Appeal."

United Jewish Appeal? Man, was this guy *farblondjet*.

"But Sandra happened to have spent the first three years of her life, if you can believe this, in a closet somewhere in Poland, being hidden from the Nazis. Can you imagine it? She was a little girl who spent the first years of her life in darkness, in silence. And out of that crazy-making beginning, all that vitality and brilliance.

"She didn't learn to talk until the war was over.

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Maybe that's why she has absolutely no memory at all of the years she spent in the closet.

"Well, when Singer walked into their house, he just looked at Sandra—she's very attractive, a beautiful redhead—and said 'You were in the war.'

"Of course, she was astounded. She has no memory of the war at all. And she asked him how he knew.

"'I see it in your eyes,' he said, 'I see the war in your eyes.'"

And Luke McClean—and his beloved Jewish Nobel Prize laureate, Isaac Bashevis Singer—made me start to cry.

LUKE dropped out of law school after that first disastrous year—I have to say with my encouragement—and he went on to his third career. He became an elementary-school teacher, and he's managed to hang on to that one. In fact he's a fantastic sixth-grade teacher, here in New York City, in what they call the inner-city schools, where they sure as hell can use fantastic teachers.

I don't know how long Luke will be able to keep at it. He puts everything into it, he's totally involved with those kids, and the burnout rate is known to be high. I'm pretty certain that there'll be, somewhere down the line, a fourth career. But right now, Luke's a teacher, heart and soul.

I, of course, kept on at Harvard Law School, made *Law Review*, and got a job with a prestigious firm on Wall Street with one of those legendary starting salaries, the kind that law-school students tenderly whisper in their sleep. However, I only stayed there long enough to pay off the debts from law school, which had been my plan all along.

I hated it on Wall Street. I hated the kind of law I had to do there. Terminally boring stuff. I hated that Wasp firm, that had done the little Jewish girl with the enormous brains such a great favor in hiring her. Of course, my name now is McClean. I took Luke's name because my own family had disowned me. I made a point, though, during the interviews at Wasp firms, of mentioning that my father was a rabbi, so that they'd know what they were getting, if they chose to take it. Wasp firms. Jewish firms. Where else but in the law can one get away with such crap?

Okay, so now I'm McClean.

Working there on Wall Street I was like the patriarch Jacob, putting in his time for Leah so that he could eventually marry Rachel. I was putting in my time on Wall Street so that I could eventually make the very uncool, very un-Harvard move of becoming a public defender. My version of marrying Rachel is the job I have now as an appellate attorney for small-time drug dealers and other assorted disenfranchised types.

So Luke's in the inner-city schools, battling away to try to keep his students from ever ending up in my office which is down near the courthouse, and where, by the way, the burnout rate is also rumored to be somewhat high. And I can understand that, even though I'm in no immediate danger myself. But I've been here for almost two years, and I can see how the cases begin to get repetitive, and how after a while you get to not believe any of your clients, for the simple reason that they tend to be liars. Really stupid liars, committing contradictions that they don't even see as contradictions. Then there's the other type of criminal who's very honest about what he's done because if he did it, it's got to be okay.

Partly what still keeps me fired up is my belief in the right of appeal. There's also the occasionally interesting case where the previous judge really did slip up, often in a way so subtle it's a challenge to present it.

Recently I had a case where the criminal himself was an interesting type. He happened to be a Hasid, convicted for credit-card fraud. We're still not exactly sure how he and his pals worked it. Guy 1 legitimately had a bunch of credit cards. Guy 2 asks Guy 1 if he'll help him out with his debts, give him the credit cards for about two weeks, and then report that they've been stolen, making up some reason why he hadn't noticed the theft up until now. It happens that my Hasid was Guy 3, who was the one who actually used the credit cards. I won't go into the whole story of how he was caught, which features a hooker in Reno, whose services were charged. Guy 2 was never caught.

The charge against my client was unauthorized use of credit cards. My cute little angle in the case was to claim that, since Guy 1 knew that this was a case of fraud, he *had* authorized their use.

The case I was trying to build got even trickier, since there's legislative history that actually applies to this little gap through which I was trying to slip my crook. A Senate report had addressed this gap, but a House report had left it unmentioned, which absence, I had argued, showed that the House wanted the gap left *in situ*.

In short, what I was building was a nifty little house of cards.

This Hasid was very different from my other clients. Well, obviously he was. But what I mean is that he was really quite clever, almost subtle, in a twisted kind of way. He had a lot of things to say about his own defense, which, of course, made my job that much harder, but still made it all that much more interesting, too.

Whenever the Hasid mentioned anything about Judaism I played completely dumb. Just showed him my blank face. But my particular face can't be made quite blank enough.

"You married a *goy*, didn't you, Rachel McClean?"

I stared at him, startled by the question, even more by the contempt with which he spoke it.

"What was your name before?" he persisted.

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"Do you want to tell me what this has to do with your case?" I finally snapped back at him. I hate it when I feel that hostile toward a client.

Since he's a Hasid, his *rebbe* got into the act as well. I had to speak to this *rebbe* a couple of times on the phone. I did a good job with him, too. My client had told him I was Jewish, but they obviously figured I was just one of the tragically ignorant. When the *rebbe* mentioned Purim to me, he felt he had to add the clause, "That's the Jewish Halloween."

"Is it?" I answered.

By the way, my angle in the case, cute as it was, didn't save the Hasid. Some judges I know might even have gone for it. But one of the judges we got (in a federal appeals case one gets three) is a champion bridge player and one of the sharpest analytic minds I've ever encountered on the bench. He gave my nifty little house of cards a very brief appreciative smile, then knocked the whole thing over.

My boss thinks this judge, who barely ever betrays anything remotely like a smile, maybe likes me. Last week, when I appeared before him again, he gave me another tiny smile, and said, "Oh, it's you again."

I lost that appeal, too.

I win maybe 2 percent of my cases, which isn't too bad, considering that all my clients are probably guilty as hell.

Ah, creeping cynicism. The harbinger of burnout. But I can't really afford to burn out at this particular stage of the game.

People had told me, when I was pregnant, that I was going to feel so conflicted about immediately going back to work, that every woman, no matter how ambitious for her career, goes all mellow right after she's had a baby. A simple matter of hormones, of that almost mystical mother/baby bonding.

There must have been something wrong with my bonding. My bonding must have sealed not quite right. It all dissolved as soon as I suspected that there was something wrong with the baby.

There is something wrong with the baby, and we don't know what it is. She's twelve months old and she doesn't sit up yet. She doesn't make eye contact. Her eyes are empty.

We've had her in for test after test, ever since she was seven months old, and we began to think there might be something wrong. Up until then we simply thought she was an unusually good baby. So quiet and unfussy. Just the sort of baby two working parents needed.

I hadn't had amniocentesis, since I was only twenty-seven. But anyway, it's nothing to do with genes. One doctor suggested that she be tested for Tay-Sachs disease. Stupid, automatic response on his part, since Tay-Sachs is recessive. But it seems that the baby looks like the classic picture of this syndrome, just that sort of vacant lethargy.

But they don't know what's wrong with her, and they don't know what she'll be like, how dysfunctional she'll end up being. Right now, they're only saying that she's seriously developmentally delayed, a diagnosis that simply summarizes the problem.

I had taken it for granted that the child I carried would be, at the very least, smart. The smartest kid in the class, just like the Mom. I already had devised my theories of education for it.

I remember walking home from one of the first of the visits I paid to one of the first of the doctors, and passing some ubiquitous homeless, with their terribly vacant eyes. They were the sort of losers, deadbeats, criminals whose appeals I end up writing.

There was one woman, slouched up against a building. She was horrible to look at, filthy, ageless. She could've been twenty, she could've been sixty. She was snarling out curses to an unseen antagonist.

I actually stopped dead on the sidewalk, the baby was sleeping in the carrier strapped to my chest, and I stared down at the heap of rags and misery, until it noticed and started shrieking out profanities at me.

That moment also has to be counted among the three or four worst in my life. It had just hit me, for the first time, that I was now connected to people of this sort in a new way, in a way I can't bear to be connected.

It's not in the genes. A perfectly wonderful child had been formed, of this I'm certain, and then something had happened. When?, I keep wondering. During those terribly critical first eighteen weeks? A whiff of something toxic, some moments of oxygen deprivation? Or during the birth? When?

But something did happen, it's clear, though we don't yet know what, and maybe never will. And now my life is bound up with the kind of questions I can't bear to ask.

I hate this baby for that, although I'm too ashamed to tell anyone, by which I suppose I mean Luke, who loves the baby, in a painful, protective way.

A creature was formed, whom her father and I named Gabriella. A creature who will never do anything good, never contribute, never enlighten, never improve the world into which she was born. A creature who will only be a drone and a failure—a joyless obligation to others.

And because there is this Gabriella, because I have brought this Gabriella into the world, I am no longer in control of my life. Nothing before could ever overcome me. I could think my way clear of every obstacle. No matter how bad a case, if there was any angle at all, I'd come up with it.

The woman who takes care of the baby, Mrs. Foote, still insists that's she's just the best baby in the world. She constantly talks to her, jangles

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keys in an effort to stimulate her, insists on taking her out for the four hours of fresh air daily that Dr. Spock deems advisory. Mrs. Foote is a find, a marvel. I marvel over her all the time, how it is that she just refuses to give up on that baby. There's something so soothing about her persistence in the illusion of normalcy. She's balm for my nerves.

Mrs. Foote is, of all things, a Jehovah's Witness. Very occasionally she'll slip into a proselytizing mode, start quoting from the Bible about the great things that are a-coming. But she doesn't press. Years of experience have taught her to judge when a person is likely to slam the door in her face. And I am, of course, just the kind of person to slam the door in a Witness's face.

Mrs. Foote has completely taken over for me, sees that I can't deal with the baby anymore, can't even hold it. She and Luke together manage without me.

She mothers me as well, likes "to do" for me, as she puts it.

I used to resent people's trying "to do" for me. There's no doubt about the fact that I tend to bring out the mother in people. It's a matter of my appearance. I still look about twelve years old, even when I dress up like a lawyer. I'm still puny. I've always been able to eat anything I want and stay skinny. At college my two roommates, who both had weight problems, would go nuts watching me go through my KitKats and other assorted junk. Every night I'd sit down to my books and my junk food, and listen to my two roommates—who were always nibbling on things like carrots and celery stalks—groan about the unfairness of life.

I was a kid who didn't look like a kid, and now I'm a grown-up who doesn't look like a grown-up, so people have always been trying "to do" for me, one way or another.

And then there's the indelible pathos of my face, that reads like a subtext, as the French philosophers say, subverting all my overt aggressiveness.

The baby has my eyes. Her empty eyes are rabbinical eyes. Huge, heavy-lidded, bruised, and sad.

I remember Luke's leaning over me in the recovery room, as I came out of anaesthesia. I had had a C-section, my frame too narrow for a natural birth. But the obstetrician insists that everything went normally.

"My darling girl," Luke was saying to me as I opened my eyes. "My darling girl," he kept repeating to me.

And then his voice went soft with wonder. "Do you know? Our daughter has the rabbinical eyes."

If only I knew what's wrong with her, what went wrong. I'd know what to expect. If she's bad enough, we can just put her in an institution, and then forget that she ever was.

I'd think it was the curse of my family that had somehow done it to us.

"May you, too, have a child that causes you such grief."

But my parents never said anything of the kind to me. They're not the type of people who would ever curse, not even a daughter they had disowned. And I'm not the type of person to believe in the efficacy of curses.

Those places out in the hinterland where we had lived when I was a kid never had a proper Hebrew day school for Gideon and me. There were the synagogue Sunday schools, but these were completely inadequate for the purposes of my family. They were meant for the children of those tragically ignorant Jews.

So both my father and my mother taught the Jewish subjects to Gideon and me. There was no gender-differentiation in what they taught us. My father studied Talmud with me just as hard and as long as with Gideon. I know that Orthodox Jews are rumored to be sexist. Hell, it's no rumor. One sage wrote that it was better for the sacred books to be burned than be taught to Jewish daughters. And the Vilna Gaon warned, in a letter to his daughters, that women should stay away from the synagogue, since they're likely to engage there in nothing more uplifting than malicious gossip, which is a fairly serious sin in Judaism.

My family wasn't at all tainted by this kind of bigotry. My father's opinion of people in general tended not to be very high. He saw most forms of human activity as varieties of *bitul z'man*, wastes of time. But I don't think he thought that there were more yentas than there were kibitzers, or that the yentas were, on the whole, of a more vicious or inferior variety than their brothers in *bitul z'man*.

I've read some of the angry literature that's been put out recently by Jewish feminists. And truly there seems to be a lot to be angry about. All I can say is that the kind of mindless dismissal of girls that seems to typify certain parts of the Orthodox Jewish world simply wasn't my experience at all. If anything, my father worked me a little harder than he did Gideon, because I had so much more *sitzfleisch*, staying power.

I was thrilled when he nodded his head at some line of reasoning I had produced. I heard him once tell my mother that I had a good Gemorah head, the highest praise.

I loved studying alone with my father, getting all of his attention. My father would have made a brilliant lawyer. His Telz background made him so much more suited to the law than to the pulpit. While he was instructing me over a page of Talmud there was no room for the painful double-vision of him to enter.

I could get pretty intense when I studied with my father. I swayed back and forth over the massive open volume, faster and faster.

Sometimes my father would suddenly pull away from the text, sit back in his chair, and turn to

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me. He would cup my face in his palm, smiling.

"Relax, Rochele, there is no contest here. You don't have to go so fast. Enjoy the trip a little. Sit back, look out the window. There's some nice scenery."

This was the absolutely perfect thing to say to me, because another one of the pleasures that my father and I shared was going for drives together. At least this was a very great pleasure for me. Nothing relaxed me more, as a child, than sitting in the back seat of one of our beat-up second-hand cars—there was a longer series of these than there were homes; cars died on us, one after the other. I remember one of these beauties had a big hole in the floor of the back, through which Gideon and I surreptitiously dropped our candy wrappers, thinking it hysterically funny that we could litter in such an undetectable fashion.

But going for a ride wasn't my active brother's idea of the perfect recreation, only mine. I don't think my father could have enjoyed these drives all that much, either. He was a very poor driver, went too slowly. Other drivers yelled at him. But as long as he kept off the highways, it was okay.

We didn't speak to each other on our drives alone together. I don't think my father was really capable of speaking and driving at the same time. He always remained a stranger to the wheel.

But I liked this silence in the car. I'd give myself up totally to the movement. I'd sit back and look out the window, and be completely absorbed in the passing scenes. Savannah, Omaha, Port Jervis. Hell, I even liked driving around Trenton.

Whenever he had to drive me somewhere I always asked him if he could give me an extra ride, just for nothing. And he always did, even though he didn't like driving, and aimless driving must certainly have counted in his book as a species of *bitul z'man.*

I REMEMBER when I found out that we would have to be leaving Trenton. I had prayed like crazy that I would be able to go to junior high there, together with Freddy, where we could continue the good fight.

We had remained in Trenton for so long, three years, that I had sort of forgotten the air of anxiety that always entered the house around the time my father's contract came up for renewal.

Only I sort of hadn't forgotten. I knew the meaning of those closed discussions between my father and my mother. They'd go into the dining room, and close the sliding doors, and I would gnaw at my already chewed-off fingernails.

"Would you be awfully sad to leave Trenton?" I asked Gideon.

"Yeah, sure," he said. "Trenton's nice. I have a lot of good friends here."

"You'd make other friends," I told him. "You always do."

"I guess," he said, but sadly.

Of course, when my parents announced to Gideon and me that we would be leaving Trenton soon, not yet certain for where (it turned out to be Chattanooga, Tennessee), Gideon and I said that was exciting, it was getting boring in Jersey, it was time to move on. This was, I said, for me the perfect time to leave, since I'd have to be changing schools anyway. And Gideon made up some reason also, to explain why it was the perfect time for him to leave New Jersey, too.

I was filled with rage at those tragically ignorant Jews, who couldn't see how lucky they were to have a real *talmid khokhem* for their rabbi.

My father asked me that evening, after dinner, if I would like to go for a ride with him.

We got into the big old Buick that was currently functioning, not too well, as the family means of transportation.

We kept driving, slow but steady, out of Trenton, out onto the highway going north.

I forgot a little of my sadness as I watched the trees, interspersed with the occasional diner or store, go past.

We drove all the way to Princeton, getting off the highway there, and driving around the quiet beautiful town.

We hadn't spoken, had kept up our usual silence in the car. But as we circled the rim of the campus, we admired aloud the beauty and sheer massiveness of the buildings.

And then my father suddenly said to me:

"Maybe you'd like to go to Princeton someday. Maybe this is where you'll go to college."

"Maybe," I answered from the back seat.

There was a slight pause, and then he said, so kindly, it broke my heart to hear it, "Maybe you'll be able to come back to New Jersey some day, Rochele."

He was trying to comfort me. It broke my heart that he was trying to comfort me.

You don't need to, Dad, I wanted to say. So I have to leave Trenton. So I have to leave Freddy. So big deal. I can cope with much worse than this.

I struggled, there in the darkness of the back seat, trying to find some safely neutral way of saying this to my father, just as he had found a way to speak to me. My brilliant father! My brilliant father who shouldn't even have to be here, driving around in the nighttime, trying to apologize to a daughter.

What I don't understand, what I will never be able to understand, is how a father who once loved a daughter so much could sit *shiva* for her while she was still alive.

My father doesn't even know about the baby. I wonder how he would have reacted to such a granddaughter. It was from him that I learned the way of Telz. I was raised on stories of the great *geonim.* There wasn't any mention made, in our hagiography, of the figure of the sainted idiot.

Luke has said that we must write to my parents

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and tell them about the baby. That perhaps it will make a difference.

But if we did write to them, and if it didn't make a difference, how would I be able to bear it?

LUKE is an amazingly easy touch. When we walk down Broadway together—we live on the Upper West Side, from where he travels uptown to his work, and I travel downtown to mine—and if there's someone with his hand out within a two-mile radius, he's bound to sniff out Luke, and come sidling up to him.

They all get to him: the druggies, the little old ladies with their charity boxes and their orphanages in Israel. All the assorted *schnorrers* of the Upper West Side.

Luke doesn't refuse to make eye contact and just keep on walking, the way any other sane person in New York does. He stops on the sidewalk, and attends *seriously* to what the druggie is incoherently mumbling, or the spiel the lady is giving him, while I tug at his sleeve, muttering darkly about people who refuse to learn.

The number of charitable organizations whose lists Luke has managed to get himself onto is simply staggering. Obviously there's a nefarious practice of interorganizational sharing of names that goes on, so that the solicitations that arrive here are growing out of control, like something cancerous. Any other sane human being would simply trash the unopened letters, not sit there at our kitchen table, night after night, opening them, reading them, sorting them out according to some system of his I don't even want to know about. Frankly, I've been tempted to do some sorting of my own. But I don't know which of these charities is particularly dear to Luke's heart.

He makes out his checks in multiples of eighteen, ever since I explained to him why it is that those are the sums so often requested by the Jewish organizations, that the two Hebrew letters designating eighteen are also the letters that spell out the word *life*. Luke liked that, and even gives to his gun-control and mothers-against-drunk-driving and save-the-sea-turtles organizations in multiples of eighteen.

The pile is particularly high now, since Luke, still the Semitophile, has managed to get himself onto so many Jewish lists; and this is September, the time of the Jewish New Year, when the appeals come thick and fast.

The other night Luke came into the living room, where I sat working on an appeal for a small-time drug dealer, my usual sort of case, this one pretty hopeless, since the guy seems to have gotten a fair trial; and Luke wordlessly handed me one of *his* appeals.

"What's this?" I asked him.

"Just read it, Rache," he answered, and went back into the kitchen.

It came from a girl's orphanage in Jerusalem, and I had to admit that they had added a new little twist I'd never seen before. There was a little envelope where you could check off the amount of your donation, that was nothing new. But there was also space provided on the envelope for the donor to write his own little special plea to God, as the accompanying letter explained:

> We ask you, once again, to remember our innocent little orphan girls at this very special time of the Jewish year. We have provided a place where you can write in your own personal message to THE HIGHEST ONE. Your appeal will be carried to THE WESTERN WALL by our little girls, and placed by them there between the sacred stones. You can be certain that your words, placed there by these unfortunate orphans of Israel, who are beloved and blessed in THE DIVINE SIGHT, will carry a special power of efficacy in the HEAVENLY REALM.

I was slightly shocked by the brazen simplemindedness of what I read. I don't believe I had ever seen a metaphysics so unashamedly exposed. My family never would have spoken in terms such as these.

The space provided was not very large. One would have to be succinct. How, precisely, would one do it?

You see, HIGHEST ONE, I have this child. She's twelve months old and there's clearly something wrong with her, but so far no one can tell us what.

But then THE HIGHEST ONE would know all that, wouldn't He? Not much briefing is required when addressing OMNISCIENCE.

Pare it down to a simple petition, then. How about: make it be true that my baby is normal. Only that: normal.

Make it be true? What an awkward choice of words. A verbal clumsiness betraying a logical absurdity.

Make it be true? What could that possibly mean, in the present case? The truth was the truth. The only thing still missing was the knowledge of it. And that would come, sooner or later, without God's help.

What then could I write? For I was tempted, beyond reason, to write something. Luke would be giving these people his money anyway. What could it hurt if I scribbled in some chosen words, to be placed within the stones by those little orphan girls of Israel?

But I didn't know how to do it. I had no idea, I hadn't a clue, how to write a letter to God.

WHAT would my father, I wondered, have made of this space provided on the envelope? Would he have dismissed it as another bit of backward nonsense, some more wishful thinking disguising itself as religion on the part of the pious ignoramuses?

My father, of course, addresses God three times

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daily, and my father is a paragon of rationality. So then, there must be some logically consistent way to do it. How?

Does my father petition in his prayers? Plead? Ask for special favors? It's hard to reconcile such a possibility with what I know of my father.

What precisely does my father do when he prays? What does he think about while he recites the liturgy?

I once walked into the dining room when my father was saying his morning prayers. Normally I wouldn't have done that, walked into the same room where my father was praying. But I had left my math book there the night before, and I had to get it for school.

My father was wrapped in his prayer shawl, his left arm and forehead bound in phylacteries. His eyes were closed and he didn't see me. I stood there, waiting for him to notice me, and give me a sign that it was okay to enter the room and get my schoolbook.

But his eyes remained closed, he didn't seem to have heard me. And then I saw that there were tears streaming down his face. His cheeks were wet.

This, too, was a possibility hard to reconcile with what I knew of my father. He certainly never cried, never betrayed any sign of emotion, when he prayed before his congregation.

I fled the room, forgetting the book.

I wish I had had the nerve, had not been so fatally shy, to ask my father then, when he loved me so much and would have tried to give me an answer, why he cried when he prayed. I wish I had asked him what it was that he did when he prayed.

I can't believe that he was pleading, asking for favors, petitioning for change. But it's possible that what he did, three times daily, was acknowledge his helplessness.

I still have that envelope from the orphanage in Jerusalem. I never gave it back to Luke. It's not, of course, that I don't want him to give money to those little orphan girls. I'm just still trying to figure out how to write my letter to God.

THE baby slept through the night from the beginning. How lucky we are, Luke and I had congratulated ourselves. What a considerate baby we have.

Sometimes I get up in the night anyway, and go in to her room. I've thought many times of killing her. She'd be easy enough to suffocate.

I've read a lot about crib death. I believe I could make it look quite convincing. I believe I would get off.

If I killed Gabriella my life would be mine again. But if I killed Gabriella I wouldn't deserve to have Luke's love anymore. And so I almost certainly won't kill her. But I do wish she would die.

The other night I had a dream that the hospital where Gabriella was born called to tell me a terrible mistake had been perpetrated in the nursery, the night of the birth.

I could hear that the person on the line was very nervous, afraid of a ruinous lawsuit.

What had happened was that the name tags had somehow become mixed up and we had been given the wrong baby. Our real baby, a bouncing bright-eyed little girl, had been taken home by the Freudensteins, who were on their way over now with her.

Poor Freddy, I thought, for a moment. And then a stream of joy went blazing through my whole body.

She isn't mine! She isn't mine! Give me my real baby, Freddy Frankenstein!

But then, even in the dream, I remembered that the vacant eyes were my eyes. And so I knew that that damaged person was irreparably mine, and everything went dead again inside me.

My unconscious is very big on denial. I suppose they all are. That's supposed to be one of their major functions, isn't it?

I remember the whole series of denial dreams I had after I learned that my family had truly sat *shiva* for me.

Did I think they wouldn't? Did I think they loved me so well that they would, for just this once, ignore what their religion told them they were supposed to do?

Yes, I suppose I did. I knew it would be difficult, a very tricky case, but I was certain that I could win it. I had a deep-down belief, always, in my ability to win. To arrive at the new school, pick out the adversary, and go get him. I don't believe I ever entertained the possibility of being defeated by circumstance. Of course, I could have come away from my childhood, from the picture of my father, such an American failure, with quite a different sense of the odds. But I hadn't. I was American-born, endowed with an Emersonian sense of self-reliance.

You see, the angle was that Luke loved my eyes. He loved my haunted face, and all the ghosts that came trailing behind it. Hadn't that been the happy ending my mother had been promising me all along, and that I had kept going back to her to hear, again and again, complaining to her about how ugly I was, just so that I could hear it once more? It was, for me, the archetypal story of romance, its legend. Legend, not just as in myth, but as in the explanatory code attached to a map. I mean the story of how Esther Mykoff, American-born and beautiful, had immediately agreed to meet the young Lithuanian rabbi with the rabbinical eyes.

So what if in my case it was a *farblondjet* philosopher from Nebraska? Couldn't my mother, who was always so interested in everyone's story, be able to see that, so far as the essentials went, the two stories were the same?

I had counted on my mother's ultimate under-

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standing, and then on her bringing my father around.

Luke had offered to convert, but I, furious at them, hurt beyond all words that they didn't love me enough, wouldn't hear of it.

Anyway, no Orthodox rabbi would have converted him just on the basis of his wanting to marry a Jewish girl. They would have put him through an interminable rigmarole. And if it were anything but an Orthodox conversion it would have meant nothing at all to my parents. So nothing at all is what they got.

But I used to dream, night after night, that I opened up the front door of the apartment, and heard the soft murmur of a voice. And I walked down our long hall, thinking: I know that voice, I know that voice. My heart would float higher and higher as I walked down the long hall.

And then I stepped into the living room. And there was my father, drinking a glass of tea with Luke. Both of them turned to me and smiled.

Last night I got up in the middle of the night and went to stand a long time over the baby's crib. She hadn't been sleeping when I stepped into the room. She was just lying there with her eyes open.

I finally went back to bed and fell asleep. Sometime, it must have been around dawn, I had a variation on my old dream.

I dreamed I got home from work, and opened the door to hear the murmur of the voice as I walked down the hall. And my heart began to float.

When I stepped into the living room I saw my father together with Luke. They were sitting close beside one another on the couch. My father's back was to me, but when he turned around I saw he was holding the baby.

He stood, stretching out his arms, holding out my daughter to me.

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Accounting for Anti-Semitism

Jacob Katz

The term anti-Semitism made its first appearance in Germany in the fall of 1879. It was introduced into public discourse by Wilhelm Marr, one of the leading figures in an anti-Jewry campaign which had been gaining strength for the better part of the decade and which emerged at this juncture into a full-fledged social-political movement. We know with certainty what prompted the use of the term and why it was so readily adopted by the general public. The men who coined and propagated it wished to convey the idea that their objection to Jews had nothing to do with traditional "Jew-hatred." A product of bygone times and obsolete conceptions, Jew-hatred had arisen against the background of the religious conflict between Jews and Christians. The anti-Semites, for their part, claimed to be entirely free of religious prejudice.

What, then, was their complaint against the Jews? It was, they said, prompted by Jewish *behavior*, by the preponderance of Jews in the economy, by Jewish penetration into the social fabric and cultural life of the nation, and so forth. Thus ran the reasoning of the German anti-Semites, who had been anticipated by forerunners in Hungary and who were followed by imitators in Austria and France. In all these places Jews were viewed as aliens, their participation in national life as an intrusion and usurpation. Only seldom was reference made to events and ideas of earlier times; the data of the moment were considered sufficient grounds for hostility.

Strangely enough, an explanation structurally similar to the one offered by the anti-Semites of the late 19th century can be found in the work of Jewish historians of our own day. The late Salo W. Baron, for example, testifying at the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961 as an eminent authority on anti-Semitism, resorted to a formula coined by sociologists to explain the worldwide phenomenon of discrimination against ethnic minorities: "The dislike of the unlike." Now it may well be that when Jews first settled among Gentiles in antiquity, they, like other ethnic minorities, fell victim to the "dislike of the unlike." But by the 19th century and for many generations previously, Jews had ceased to be a truly alien element in society. In the Christian environment especially, Jews were not strangers in the sense of being unknown and therefore baffling and antagonizing. Indeed, Christians knew about Jews from their own religious tradition.

For better *and* for worse, it was this very knowledge which historically had defined the Jews' status in Christian eyes. For better: as heirs to the "Old Testament," Jews enjoyed relative legitimacy and dignity, and on this basis were admitted to Christian society and tolerated in a way that other deniers of the Christian faith, especially Christian heretics, were not. For worse: Jews were relegated to an inferior position politically, economically, and socially as a penalty for having rejected and killed Christ and for their "obstinacy" ever since in refusing to acknowledge the truth of Christianity. They were therefore to be tolerated but subjugated until they changed their minds; in the meantime, their low condition was visible testimony to the fact that they had been forsaken by God.

Under this theological cover—the quasi-official teaching of the Church—the Jews survived during the Middle Ages. Yet the price of survival was far higher than may have been intended by those who set it. The despicable role of the Jews in the Christian drama—a theme of ritual, liturgy, and art—became imprinted on public consciousness. The notion of Jewish culpability became the excuse for periodic outbursts which could not be curbed by the admonitions of religious or the protection of secular authorities, which were anyway not always forthcoming. Indeed, the religious and secular powers themselves often went beyond the perimeter set by doctrine and expelled or segregated their Jewish subjects. This was a cumulative process, so that at the dawn of modern times we encounter European Jews living in ghettos or ghetto-like areas.

Then, in the 18th and 19th centuries, came emancipation, the magic potion through which all traces of the sad past were to be erased. Jews were now to be included in the state as citizens, admitted to all circles of society, no longer prevented from entering any field of endeavor. The idea of Jewish emancipation was the legitimate child of a rationalism that embraced all aspects of social organization. In the thoroughly secularized society of the future, it was held, Jews and Christians, or rather, former Jews and former Christians, would meet as equal human beings.

In the first decades of the emancipation period, which coincided with the rise of European liberal-

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ism, it seemed as if this optimistic vision would indeed materialize. Jews extricated themselves from physical as well as cultural isolation and made important strides into the economic and social spheres. Strictures against them still in evidence could be readily explained away as but a residue of bygone eras—so ran the diagnosis made at the time by Jews and Gentiles alike. No wonder, therefore, that the emergence of the anti-Semitic movement toward the close of the 19th century baffled so many people—what could have gone wrong with their expectations?

In retrospect we are not at a loss to account for the reversal of the Jewish cause. Emancipation was a good that had been granted by the secularized state. So far as I am aware, no official representative of Christianity in any country had been consulted as to its desirability. True, in the public debate prior to the passage of the emancipatory legislation, some theologically-minded observers raised the objection that granting equal social and economic status to Jews contradicted the ancient tenet according to which their toleration in Christian countries depended upon their being kept in eternal bondage; others made similar arguments even after emancipation was granted. But these were individual voices. The Church took no stand on the issue—it did not protest, but neither did it give its consent.

And as the Church took no active part in emancipation, so it refrained thereafter from adapting to it. Some enlightened clergymen, in the performance of their public duties, may have mitigated traditional anti-Jewish expressions. On the popular level, however, Christian teaching, with its stereotypes of Jewish character, remained intact. The Church did not silence those publicists who continued to charge the Jews with the crime of deicide, or who propagated other anti-Jewish stereotypes. Nor did the Church take any steps to eliminate elements of its ritual and liturgy which more or less prompted anti-Jewish feelings in the worshipper. Nor did the Church renounce the deeds and rhetoric of the anti-Semites. As against the few Christian dignitaries who did indeed raise

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What are the facts?

■ We Americans are reluctant to criticize or even to discuss the religions of others. We consider it a very personal matter. But the profound hatred of the Moslem Arab world against the West, especially against the United States (the "Great Satan") and Israel (the "Little Satan") can only be explained by trying to comprehend the psychology and the principal religious tenets of Islam. Islam is a world-wide religion, but it originated in Arabia and it survives in Arabia in its purest and most virulent form. The policies of the Arab countries are totally dominated by Islam. Islam believes itself to be in possession of the holy truth. In the name of that truth, any act of violence is permitted, sanctioned and encouraged. It is perhaps only with that understanding that the "strategic decisions" of Saddam Hussein, even with his armed forces at the edge of destruction, can be explained.

■ For the first six centuries after the Moslems spilled forth from the Arabian peninsula, they conquered much of the then known world, with the sword in one hand and the Koran in the other. The Arab Moslems did in their ascendancy indeed give rise to a substantial civilization. But then, beginning with the expulsion from Spain, a long decline set in that lasted until the beginning of the 20th century. That decline was the more bitter, the more frustrating, because is was inflicted by the hated and despised "infidels". It was something that had to be remedied by whatever means. Injured pride had to be salved; the enemies who caused this humiliation and this painful injury had to be destroyed.

■ The 20th century brought national independence to the Arab states. Two other fundamental events occurred: 1) The discovery of the world's largest oil deposits under the Arabian peninsula, and 2) The creation, in 1948, of the state of Israel, which ever since its birth has been the concentrated focus of hatred and venom of all Moslem Arabs, a hatred that unites them, even surpasses their hatreds against each other, and that has launched them into five disastrous wars against Israel. Even the rape of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein's Iraq was explained as being a step towards the "liberation of Palestine", a claim so bizarre, so patently absurd that it can only be comprehended and given credence by a mind obsessed with the ideology of Arab Islam.

■ The obsession of the Moslem Arabs with Israel is totally irrational. To have Israel, an advanced highly civilized Western outpost, as an independent country in the middle of the Arab-Moslem world is utterly intolerable to them. That is the reason that the 21 Arab states, among them the richest countries in the world, with a combined population of more than 200 million and with a land area greater than that of the U. S., have since the beginning of the century concentrated obsessive ferocity by military, economic, ideological, political, diplomatic, and any other means to destroy the tiny Jewish community of Palestine, and its successor, the Jewish state of Israel -- only 4 million people in a country just one-half the size of San Bernardino County in California.

The recent events in Iraq have sobered many who had believed the Israel-Palestinian conflict to be the cause for the unrest in the Middle East. The fact is that war is endemic in the Arab world and that the Moslem Arabs have been waging war against each other and against their non-Arab neighbors for centuries. But, as much as the Moslem Arabs hate each other, they are all united in their greater hatred against the "infidel Jews" and their tiny country, and they have built vast war machines for the ultimate "jihad" to chase the Jews into the sea. The insincere focus on the Palestinian plight is designed to divert attention from the many domestic problems and inter-Arab conflicts, and to direct the Moslem Arab frustration against Israel, the "infidel Western outsider". The suggestion that Israel divest itself from its historic heartland, the 2,362 sq. mi. "West Bank", would be a step toward its strategic suicide. The real cause of the never-ending turmoil in the Middle East is the unremitting desire of the Arab Moslem states to destroy Israel, their inability to come to terms with its very existence. That hatred and that intolerance are fueled by Arab-Moslem fanaticism and intransigence and unwillingness to accept diversity in the region. Only when that can be overcome can peace and tranquility finally come to the Middle East.

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their voices, there were the many who participated in anti-Jewish activity, or else tried to draw some benefit from it as a manifestation of Christian loyalty. Thus, when the anti-Semites came to sound their call, even though they themselves claimed to be acting on purely secular grounds, they could count on a positive response out of the depths of ordinary people's religious allegiances.

Actually, the anti-Semites' disclaimer of any indebtedness to traditional Jew-hatred was a fiction. Although irreligious themselves, if not outright atheists (like Marr and Eugen Dühring), the anti-Semites were not above referring to or invoking ingrained Christian resentments. Again, though irreligious or anti-religious, they were only too willing to cooperate with religious dignitaries like the Protestant court preacher Adolph Stöcker in Berlin or the Catholic priest and professor Auguste Rohling in Prague, men who based their own venomous anti-Jewish agitation on the concept of the Jews' absolute moral corruption. Nor would it be correct to take at face value the anti-Semites' assertion of their own freedom from the taint of traditional Jew-hatred. In the process of secularization, the disappearance of cognitive content rarely entails the disappearance of the emotions and sentiments attached to it; what usually happens is that these same affective elements now cling to the new cognitive content. So with the anti-Semites, who only substituted new carriers for an old animosity.

There is no way of explaining the rapid expansion of anti-Semitism and its deep penetration socially and psychologically other than by noting the ways in which it capitalized on the residue of traditional Jew-hatred. In the course of time, this post-emancipatory revival of anti-Jewish sentiment would even come to serve as a prelude to the physical destruction of the Jews. By this I do not mean that the Holocaust was an inevitable *result* of antecedent anti-Semitism, but that the ground for it was well prepared. The Holocaust itself was unpredictable, as I have long argued,* but the defamation and persecution of Jews that preceded it were its necessary, although not its sufficient, precondition.

In view of the fact that traces of the teachings of Christianity, often called the "teaching of contempt," can be found in the ideological background of the modern persecution of Jews, up to and including the Holocaust itself, can Christianity be held responsible for those events? My answer is a qualified one. In antiquity and through the Middle Ages, Jews and Christians alike acted on their convictions, Christians in granting to those who rejected the Christian religion a limited space in which to live, Jews in accepting their harsh situation as divinely ordained. Both sides were embedded in the world of their conceptions, and only those who share that world view are qualified to judge their actions.

It is altogether different when we speak of modern times, when only the sediment of medieval conceptions still survived. It is, of course, absurd to charge anyone except those who actively participated with responsibility for a deed as unforeseeable and unforeseen as the Holocaust. But when it comes to historical enormities of this scale, we are also obliged not to neglect or slight their antecedents. A clear paradox is presented here, and I should like to offer a solution to it by referring to a source from the Jewish legal tradition.

In the Babylonian Talmud the following case is discussed: a shepherd is charged with the duty of protecting a herd against thieves. The shepherd leaves the herd, and although in his absence no thieves arrive on the scene, the herd is attacked, and devoured, by wolves. Is the shepherd liable for the damage? According to the school of thought whose decision is finally accepted by the Talmud, the shepherd has indeed neglected his responsibility and is thus liable for the damages, even though they were unforeseeable. To apply this to our case, I would say that in view of the circumstances, those who in the prewar period condoned anti-Semitic atrocities were guilty of at least the sin of omission, and on this basis must be assigned a measure of culpability for major consequences which at that time were unknown and hardly even conceivable.

There is also a lesson to be drawn here for our present situation. We are witnessing today various anti-Semitic developments all over the world. Although they are not, or not yet, of the most virulent kind, it is the duty of those capable of curbing them to do so, lest in the future they be held accountable for more terrible acts which, although still unforeseen, are in our day certainly no longer inconceivable.

* See my "Was the Holocaust Predictable?," Commentary, May 1975.

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Ceauşescu U.

ILLIBERAL EDUCATION: THE POLITICS OF RACE AND SEX ON CAMPUS. By DINESH D'SOUZA. *The Free Press. 319 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by JOSEPH ADELSON

This book—the most complete study we have had of the capture and degradation of higher education by the Left—received so much deserved attention prior to publication that its themes do not need much exposition. Excerpts appeared in periodicals as varied as the *Atlantic*, the *American Scholar*, and *Forbes*. Stories prompted by the book were published in all the newsweeklies. Its appearance caps a remarkable evolution of public opinion, in the now-widespread recognition that the universities have become engines of political indoctrination and control. This has, in fact, been true for about a quarter-century, but for various reasons, it has taken a long time to become evident, as is sometimes the case with malignancies. Whether this one can be treated, and at what cost to the patient, remains to be seen.

Illiberal Education opens with a chapter on what Dinesh D'Souza terms "the victim's revolution." Preferential policies in college admissions, for the presumed purpose of fostering ethnic diversity, have had the unwanted, although quite foreseeable, effects of disqualifying many able students—i.e., white males—on the grounds of race and sex, while admitting many students unable to keep up. Resentments build, and sooner or later explode in racial incidents, or at best are kept in check by de-facto self-segregation. In response, college administrations which long ago gave up the notion of *in loco parentis* about anything and everything, suddenly find that it has its uses after all, in suppressing sardonic and other untoward forms of speech. They promptly set up kangaroo courts to do so. But negative reinforcement is not quite enough, so virtuous thinking is further induced by mandatory education about the merits of diversity. Yet even that is not quite enough, so the curriculum is trashed and rebuilt. Welcome to Ceauşescu U.

D'Souza illustrates these processes by discussing key incidents at leading universities: Berkeley, on preferential admissions, because the data are public, as they are not elsewhere, and because the ethnic variety of the state of California has produced baroque patterns of racial preference; Stanford, for its pioneering work in curriculum-trashing; Howard, for its ventures in Afrocentrism; Michigan, my own beloved university, for its bungling but persistent efforts to undo the First Amendment; Duke, for breaking new ground in moral and all other forms of relativism; and finally, Harvard, for showing us how to allow great scholars like Stephan Thernstrom to be insulted by uninformed students while deans look on approvingly.

Do you find my sarcasm heavy-handed? You are probably right—it is a defense against affect, as we say in my trade. This is a painful book to read for anyone with a strong sense of what the university ought to be. Other reviews have termed what it reveals "chilling," "sickening," "disturbing," to which one can add, depressing, infuriating, appalling, disgusting, or any other adjective denoting intense negative emotion. Why is it so upsetting? Because of the sheer accumulation of detail, incident after incident, at institutions large and small, pedestrian and distinguished, each example depicting outrageous behavior—the arrogance and disingenuousness of the Left, the cravenness, confusion, and stupidity of administrators, the passivity and self-absorption of the faculty. As you read these accounts, there is a moment when you recognize, suddenly, that things are really much worse than you thought. And that recognition is followed by still another, that matters are even worse than that, since there are so many incidents no one knows about, because they are too local or too commonplace.

Some examples just from the last week or so: I learn of a history teacher who will not permit his students to use the term "Founding Fathers" because it is sexist. Students taking a course in "diversity" are told that minorities are intrinsically incapable of racism. A teacher in one of the health professions discovers that one of her students is marginally literate, cannot understand the textbook, and advises that she seek remedial help in reading; the student reports her to be racially biased, and she must meet with an associate dean before she is let off the hook.

Most troubling of all, I learn that the unexpected resignation of an old friend of mine a few years ago had been due to political pressures. She was the best teacher in her (professional) school and a scholar of national standing, yet was called to account by a faculty panel because of complaints by leftist students that she was not taking the proper line in her lectures. Her dean would not support her, and her colleagues hid out; so, being much in demand as a consultant and lecturer, she left the university. The incident itself is not unique, far from it. I report it only because she did not mention her reasons until now. Why? Because she wanted to get out as quickly as possible, too filled with contempt for her colleagues to bear their presence. Her resignation was more decisive than most. More common is an internal resignation, that inner exile we see in totalitarian states.

EVEN sympathetic outsiders may find it hard to accept the comparison. But consider the similarities. There is the din of relentless propaganda, the incessant advertising of politically correct events. My departmental bulletin board has about half of its space taken up with such notices and ads. There is a four-page newsletter from the

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Office of Affirmative Action, this one devoted to Native Americans, lamenting (tactfully) the absence of sufficient outrage; they are advised (delicately) to get with it and complain more. There is a large announcement describing all the courses in Women's Studies for the next semester, most of them quite openly political. There is a four-page brochure announcing a "diversity resources program," a sort of trade convention, where people will display and distribute their diversity materials. There is a notice inviting nominations for the Martin Luther King/Caesar Chavez/Rosa Parks lectureships, where munificent fees are awarded to minority speakers. There is a notice announcing a course which will teach all of the following: "Racism, Sexism, Homophobia, Homelessness, Domestic Violence, Environmental Destruction, Teenaged Runaways, the AIDS Crisis, Rape." All in one semester, and for two credits. The course is addressed to

> anyone who cares about social problems and wants to make a difference. If you've never been involved in social change before, this is a great way to start. If you are already working on social change, this is a way to get credit for your activism.

And those are just the offerings. You will also find a wealth of cautionary notices, warnings against discrimination and where to report suspected instances, and, more recently, warnings about date rape. We have the makings of a growth industry here, since the administration is now cooking up a sexual harassment code, a piece of legal surrealism which some teachers feel will lead to the building of dossiers containing uncorroborated accusations against faculty, including charges of ideological transgressions. These teachers may be overreacting, but given the flagrant unconstitutionality of Michigan's effort to constrain speech, no one takes anything for granted.

There are other parallels. Preferential policies bring in their wake the growth of silence and deception, designed to conceal troubling information about qualifications, costs, and outcomes. The Michigan faculty is refused any data about the test scores and grade-point averages of those admitted under affirmative action. Should you ask, the question will be evaded. Should you persist, you may be told rather coldly that it is none of your business. So much for the rights of the faculty, who on the whole acquiesce meekly, and perhaps even collusively, not really wanting to know. Many, in fact, believe the information should be kept secret, on the grounds of sensitivity and so on. What no one seems to know is what justifies keeping such data secret in a public university.

Controlling the news has the usual effects—a reliance on underground information, on rumor, gossip, innuendo, and hearsay, accuracy unknown. A professor in a neighboring department tells a woeful tale of the problems he has been having with students who, he says, never should have been admitted. A professor in the same department, in the same week, and referring to the very same students, tells a cheerful tale of obstacles overcome and pleasant surprises. Who is to be trusted? Perhaps one, perhaps the other, perhaps neither, perhaps both. I am fairly sure that the second professor, Dr. Candide, feels that good outcomes are all that matter, that the casualties of affirmative action—the majority students who are not admitted as well as the minority students who fail to make the grade—are well worth the cost. It is a not uncommon mode of justification, a peculiar form of Social Darwinism, in a way. Yet it is just as easy to imagine that both professors simply see what they want to see, and nothing else. Still, on the whole, one is more likely to trust the bearer of ill findings, since the good news makes its way immediately into a press release.

THE historian Eugene D. Genovese, reviewing this book elsewhere, proposes that the terrorism on campus be met with counter-terrorism, by demonstrations and other forms of public indignation. I wish him well, earnestly, but with not much optimism. Where will he find his recruits? Some professors are impassioned believers in racial preference. I have had an English teacher—a white male, of course—berate me because my department was hiring too many white males. He keeps count. Most faculty in the social sciences and humanities are favorably disposed, and those who have misgivings have been quiet up until now. All they need do is compute the potential costs of dissent and compare them with the benefits of remaining silent.

In a short essay written over 200 years ago, Samuel Johnson likened scholars to beauty queens; each is the fairest of them all. That vanity persists. Many scholars are too self-absorbed to become engaged unless their interests are threatened directly. This is especially true in the scientific and technical fields: the sciences, engineering, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, where the scholar's self-esteem and even survival depend upon winning research grants, and where there is every incentive to avoid the politics—either internal or external—which might distract from that end. Though they have a strong belief in maintaining standards, and are little given to egalitarian passions, the scientists will not bother unless they see a clear danger to their own work. They do not have to worry much about underqualified students or faculty appointments, not yet, since both grading and professional achievement are more easily objectified; and they do not have to cope with demands for courses on such topics as Gender and Astrophysics. Not yet.

A recent letter in the London *Times Literary Supplement* from a Marxist teacher of literature, writing on Roger Kimball's *Tenured Radicals*, scoffs at the idea that American universities have been politicized. It is much ado about nothing, he tells us; otherwise, the legislators and trustees would step in and crack down. Quite clearly this man lives in a world of his own, but his letter does raise a question. *Why* has there been so little notice taken of campus events by governing boards and legislatures? Do they know what is going on? Does it please them, or trouble them? Do they feel they can do nothing, or ought to do nothing,

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or are they simply run by the university administrators?

There are, after all, radical professors who boast openly that their mission is to indoctrinate the children of influential families, and they are successful far more often than you might think. There really are English majors who believe Alice Walker is a Truly Great Novelist, surpassing Henry James, whoever he may be. D'Souza reports that two of the militants he spoke to at Michigan had never heard of John Stuart Mill. Leaving aside the miseducation of students, Michigan has emerged as a notorious example of political correctness, even as a laughingstock. Does our Board of Regents care? Or do they just hope it will go away by itself? If the universities are to be restored, they will need the help and encouragement of others. The faculties have neither the will nor the interest: *après nous, le déluge.*

D'Souza has some very smart things to say about engaging the support of the alumni, parents, and other citizens. His wonderful book, arriving not a moment too soon, may even help turn the tide. Meanwhile, however, things continue to deteriorate. We learn from an article by Miro Todorovich, a longtime foe of the campus blight, about what has just taken place at the State University of New York at Binghamton, where a dean has run amok intellectually and has proposed a Great Purge (yes, she uses the word "purge") of faculty and departments not yet in tune with the new order of things, naming "English, Management, Sociology, Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Nursing, Cinema, History, Chemistry, and Biology." The usual sins are responsible, but a new one is added, the presence of "logocentric modes of discourse," meaning a belief in language and reason. It is a cant phrase borrowed from Derrida, a leading contributor to our contemporary confusion, and it is hard to know how and why it applies to the teaching of chemistry, and how you would fire someone on those grounds. (Do you say, "Professor Smith, you are charged with logocentric discourse about the Table of Elements"?) And if chemistry is so charged, why not physics? Both are products of that "Western Culture" which the dean wants to be rid of, since it achieved its hegemony through violence.

A few days after Todorovich's report appears, the *Wall Street Journal* brings news of another event at the same university. A mob of 200 students, some carrying canes and sticks, invades a meeting of professors and curses and jeers and threatens them and roughs up an elderly professor. The thugs, the *Journal* tells us, were incited and led by faculty, presumably praetors of the dean's new order. The university's president dismisses the incident as being of no importance.

We are left with two questions: first, how in the world do people like the dean and the president attain high academic office? And second, will someone hold them to account, and if not, why not? While we await the answer, let us at least note how fitting it is that a deconstructionist dean, an apparent disciple of Derrida, the great

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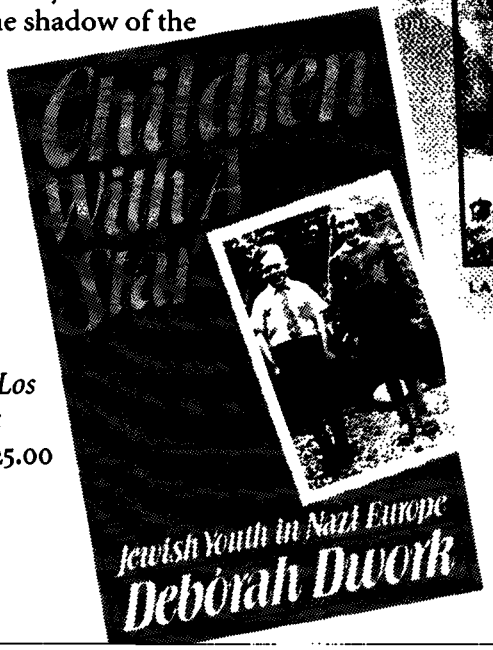

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defender of Paul de Man, the (secret) defender of the Nazis, should set in motion a new appearance of Storm Troopers.

Dead End

FIEDLER ON THE ROOF: ESSAYS ON LITERATURE AND JEWISH IDENTITY. By LESLIE FIEDLER. *David R. Godine. 161 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by ROBERT ALTER

MANY readers may be put off, as I was, by the grating pun of the title, but a certain cultivated vulgarity is both an essential part of Leslie Fiedler's design and a necessary consequence of the contradictory role as Jewish writer that he assumes. *Fiedler on the Roof* is a collection of the author's essays and book reviews since 1970 on more or less Jewish topics. These include: anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, the Book of Job, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Bernard Malamud (probably the best in the collection), and Jewish consciousness in Joyce's *Ulysses*. This miscellany does not constitute a volume with a sustained argument, and some of the individual pieces are rather slight, anecdotal, and episodic in their articulation. The essays abound in brief autobiographical revelations, and the real justification for the volume is that it spells out the author's Jewish credo, or non-credo. As such, *Fiedler on the Roof*, despite its verve, despite its occasional flashes of probing insight, is a very sad book.

Fiedler, now in his seventies, made his real mark as a critic with two books on American literature published in 1960, *Love and Death in the American Novel* and *No! In Thunder*, a volume of essays. In both he showed a flair for drawing bold mythic patterns in literature, sometimes with a casualness about matters of detail but always in ways bound to provoke thought. The years immediately following witnessed the great vogue of Jewish writing in American fiction, and though Fiedler in the transition from his early Stalinism to myth criticism had made nothing of his Jewish origins, he now became one of the liveliest expositors of the new Jewish writing. Looking back on all this two decades later, he sees the Jewish literary awakening as a transient moment, perhaps the only one in which he could find some cultural expression as a Jew, and he speaks of it in a bleakly elegiac tone: "I have long since decided that the Jewish-American novel is over and done with, a part of history rather than a living literature." Writers like Saul Bellow and Philip Roth may continue to publish fiction, but "their most recent books have come to seem not merely irrelevant but posthumous."

Although I would agree that the importance of the 60's writers was blown out of proportion, and that, as Fiedler acutely contends, much of the purportedly Jewish fiction was built on a matrix of Christian archetypes (I argued both positions in these pages at the time), the grimness of Fiedler's judgment reflects the dead-endedness of his own stance as a Jew. That stance is founded on two absolutely contradictory elements: a flaunting of Jewish ethnic style and Jewish historical memory (however selective) and a firm commitment to total assimilation. It is, I think, the display of Jewishness without a vestige of Judaism or Jewish national consciousness that leads Fiedler to play the role of the Jewish buffoon, the "aging Jewish comedian," as he puts it, and to claim rather extravagantly that he can assume the voice of Leopold Bloom, "the eternal amateur, the self-appointed prophet, the harassed Jew, the comic father" as his "own authentic voice." He is shrewd enough to perceive the contradiction—might it even be bad faith?—in this assumed persona, as when he glosses the title of his book: "I have shamelessly played the role in which I have been cast, becoming a literary Fiedler on the roof of academe."

Chagall's fiddler, turned by Broadway into the presiding spirit over the world of Sholem Aleichem, danced on the roofs of real Jewish habitations. Fiedler floats over a ghost house compacted of fragmentary memories, vestigial ethnic gestures, and mythic plots in which Jews figure. He announces at the end with a kind of melancholy pride that neither he nor any of his eight children has a Jewish spouse, and goes on to identify himself as

> not just as I have long known, a minimal Jew—my Judaism nearly nonexistent—but, as I have only recently become aware, a terminal one as well, the last of a four-thousand-year line. Yet whatever regrets I may feel, I cannot deny that I have wanted this, worked for it

To this declaration of assimilationist principle he adds the disturbing observation that his aim is unlike that of the Nazis because he seeks

> to memorialize in honor the last choice of the Chosen People: their decision to cease to exist in their chosenness for the sake of a united mankind. Still in all, it cannot be denied that the future we have dreamed is, like that foreseen for the "Thousand-year Reign," *Judenrein*.

This is, I suppose, an honorable effort on Fiedler's part to be painfully honest about the ambiguity of his own position, but it is also woefully anachronistic. There are, to be sure, plenty of Jews who are fading into the landscape through intermarriage and sheer indifference, but the notion of an idealistic aspiration to Jewish self-abolition sounds as though it should have been written in San Francisco in 1935 or in Berlin in 1835, not here and now. What other peoples have declared their readiness to disappear "for the sake of a united mankind," and how many Jews still think in those self-deluded terms? Fiedler seems entirely out of touch with all the developments—cultural, national, religious—of self-affirmation and self-discovery that have marked Jewish life in this latter part of the 20th century. Indeed, the whole modern period, from the late 18th century onward, has been a theater for what Benjamin Harshav, in his remarkable

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book, *The Meaning of Yiddish,* has called the Jewish Revolution, through which Jews have variously sought to redefine their historical location and identity as Jews and take up a new active role in history. Zionism, with all its problems, remains the most successful of these revolutionary movements, but Fiedler has no imaginative vocabulary for even thinking about Zionism or any other attempt by Jews to project their flesh-and-blood existence forward in real historical time.

For him, the Jews are a dead people, their writers prematurely "posthumous"— a fit subject only for memorialization, or alternately, a breeding ground in the critic's fertile imagination for wraithlike archetypes that play their part in a myth. A story Fiedler tells of his experience in liberated China at the end of World War II vividly exposes the tenuous link with history of his mythic thinking about Jews, even as he focuses on concrete historical events. Assigned to interrogate Japanese prisoners (the army had trained him in Japanese), he felt a wave of guilty consciousness: "I seemed to myself more like an SS interrogator than a Jew-boy from Newark, trapped in a war in which he did not believe." His lack of belief in a war that one would have thought men of conscience could have readily supported was a consequence of his youthful Marxist orthodoxy. But his peculiar perception of the vanquished Japanese aggressors flowed from his mythic recasting of the idea of the Jews, via Isaiah 50:

> I encountered them only as victims: and as victims, all men, I came then to believe, are the suffering servants through whose stripes their victimizers are healed—are, in the mythological sense, Jews.

This is, of course, a Christian typological reading of the text in Deutero-Isaiah that is fed back into a drastically schematic definition of Jewish history as an eternally reenacted myth of noble victimhood. It deprives not only the Jews but also in this case the Japanese of the specific complexity of their historical existence. It is but a protester's stone's throw from the propagandistic reversal of archetypes by which the Palestinians become Jews, "in the mythological sense."

One especially revelatory slip among numerous imprecisions in these essays is Fiedler's representation of the Yiddish term for Holy Tongue as *lashon-ha-kaddish* instead of *loshn-koydesh.* He confuses, that is, the prayer for the dead with the word that means holiness—not surprisingly, since the particular roof on which he has chosen to fiddle covers only a vast historical burying ground. What he lacks above all is any concrete sense of how Jews living in varied circumstances might have produced, might actually still be producing, vital values—at first, largely sacred, but in modern times, secular as well.

Germany Lost & Found

GERMANY: THE EMPIRE WITHIN. By AMITY SHLAES. *Farrar, Straus, Giroux. 264 pp. $19.95.*

WAR BY OTHER MEANS: SOVIET POWER, WEST GERMAN RESISTANCE, AND THE BATTLE OF THE EUROMISSILES. By JEFFREY HERF. *The Free Press. 369 pp. $27.95.*

Reviewed by MICHAEL LIND

"THE German soul has corridors and interconnecting corridors," Nietzsche wrote in *Beyond Good and Evil.* Some of those corridors are explored by Amity Shlaes in *Germany: The Empire Within.* A *Wall Street Journal* correspondent who describes herself as an "unreligious" American Jew with a love of the German language, Shlaes has collected impressionistic sketches of groups of modern Germany which are "relics" of the Communist, Hohenzollern, Hapsburg, and even the Romanov empires. Although in some respects the book is already dated (there are frequent references to the ominous rise of the radical-rightist *Republikaner,* now a spent force), these essays are well worth reading for the glimpses they provide of aspects of contemporary German life otherwise inaccessible to readers in the English-speaking world.

"What happens when, in midelegy, the beloved returns?" Shlaes asks of the unexpected westward migration of East Germans that accompanied the opening of the Wall in the fall of 1989. One answer is "Barbara"—the name at once of a refugee-help column in the Hamburg weekly *Die Zeit,* of its founder, Barbara Oster, and of the organization, Refugee Start Help, which has informally taken her name. Since Barbara Oster began helping refugees from the East in the early 50's, Barbara has become a collective personality, "a classic charity," with "a mission to help where the state cannot." Barbara is decidedly feminine and distinctly high-toned. With a sense of civic duty perhaps best described as maternalistic, Barbara does what "she" can. The challenges are immense, but "of course Barbara will handle it, and so will Germany."

Shlaes's upbeat chapter on the

MICHAEL LIND *is executive editor of the* National Interest.

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR
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integration of West Germany's newest additions from the East contrasts with the chiaroscuro of her essay on Jews in today's Germany. "The truth is this: there may be Jews who live in Germany, but there are no more German Jews." With this judgment Shlaes concludes her chapter on the Jewish community in Berlin, 175,000 strong before the war, today numbering some 5,000 in West Berlin and many fewer in East Berlin. In West Berlin's Jewish school, something of a hothouse plant subsidized by the German government and divided among old and new (Eastern) Jews, Shlaes finds a synecdoche for the German Jewish community, a "gerontocracy" presided over by a figure like Heinz Galinski, an "iron survivor of the Holocaust." Older German Jews (and other Germans) have difficulty dealing with the newly arrived Soviet Jews: "To a large degree these Jews are in Germany because West Germany has offered them a world-class financial packet of social-welfare services—in a sense, the local and federal governments have 'bought' themselves a Jewish future." Shlaes also detects an element of condescension in efforts by contemporary Germans to atone for the Nazi Holocaust; to many well-meaning Germans, Jews may represent only one more occasion for a self-absorbed inquiry into the meaning of "Germanness."

None of the other groups Shlaes portrays has suffered anything like the desolation of the Jews. Still, the postwar losses of German exiles or "expellees" from the East were significant:

> The Allies wanted to clear Central Europe, once and for all, of ethnic Germans who might cause the kind of trouble that had led to World War II. "A clean sweep will be made," Churchill told Parliament. The sweep *was* made; more than twelve million Germans were driven and fled westward as a result of this transposition. Some two million died—mostly of the cold, or disease, or malnutrition—on the trek.

In the nostalgia, self-pity, and tendentious historiography of the displaced Sudeten Germans Shlaes finds an easy target—perhaps too easy. "For outsiders," she writes, "this focus on 'wrong done to Germans' is hard to take. Some 40 to 50 million people were forced onto the road as refugees when the war ended in Europe. Only a quarter of them were exiled Germans." But the cultural interests of ethnic German minorities in Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic states, and the Soviet Union are no less legitimate than those of Russians in the Baltic republics or Turks in the Balkans—groups deposited by repugnant empires who should not be made the scapegoats for imperial crimes.

In an ironic juxtaposition, Shlaes follows her discussion of displaced ethnic Germans with chapters on the modern representatives of families such as the Prussian von Claers and the Austrian Schwarzenbergs. It was, after all, the selfish particularism of German dynasties, great and small, which (along with foreign great-power intervention) aborted the development of Germany into a nation-state like France or Britain in early modern times, a development that might have averted the horrors of Germany's belated national revolution. For centuries the emperors and the princes were enemies of German unity, of German democracy, of the German commercial classes, and of German culture.

In her portrait of Prince Karl von Schwarzenberg, an adviser to President Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia, Shlaes points to an apparent contradiction: "The very cultures his ancestors frequently made it their goal to subordinate, he himself is trying to help." The contradiction is more apparent than real, however; in the past, too, German aristocrats sometimes sided with non-German nationalisms to check German democratic nationalism, the greatest threat to their privileges. In this generally balanced book, one at times senses a greater sympathy for displaced German nobles than for displaced German nobodies.

THE transformation of German political culture from the days when it was dominated by the Schwarzenbergs, the von Claers, and their like is one of the themes of *War by Other Means*, Jeffrey Herf's study of the triumph of West Germany's "militant democracy" in the Euromissile struggle of the 70's and 80's. Where Amity Shlaes peers at German life through a microscope, Herf views it through the fisheye lens of high politics.

In particular, Herf documents the attempt of the Soviet Union a decade ago to intimidate the West German government into appeasement. By the mid-70's, thanks to a relentless military buildup which took place while America was distracted and traumatized by Vietnam, the Soviet Union had achieved strategic parity with the United States. As it proceeded to construct its arsenal of medium-range missiles, the prospect was raised that the Soviet Union could, with impunity, strike the heart of Western Europe while neutralizing the American threat to its homeland. The importance of these developments was as much psychological and political as military.

Fearing the decoupling of Germany and Europe from America and their subsequent "Finlandization," German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt called for a Western response. Schmidt, in his own words "fed up with Brzezinski and Carter, who had told me that the Russian [intermediate-range] SS-20s did not matter at all," raised the issue in a famous speech in October 1977 at London's International Institute for Strategic Studies. As Herf writes, "That speech marked the beginning of a historic reversal of the momentum of the global balance of forces, as well as the opening shot of the political battle over the Euromissiles."

Herf interweaves the logic of geopolitics with the passion of German politics. Thanks to what Herf describes as a "change in the meaning of the democratic Left from militant democracy to a popular front," Schmidt's anti-Soviet policy was repudiated by his own Social-Democratic party (SPD), dominated as it was by members of the adversary culture. With the fall of the Schmidt government, the task of defending "militant democracy"—by implementing NATO's

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1979 "two-track" decision which called for deployment of American Pershing II's coupled with negotiation with the Soviets—fell to the Christian Democrat-Free Democrat coalition of Helmut Kohl and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, along with their allies in the West German neoconservative movement.

Ultimately the *Bundestag* voted on November 22, 1983 in favor of deployment: pro-Western "militant democracy" had won. But it is important to remember that throughout the controversy, supporters of Euromissile deployment had faced not only vilification and threats from the Soviet Union but the vociferous lunacy of the German New Left. Figures like Egon Bahr and Oskar Lafontaine of the Social Democrats had sought to manipulate German neutralist and nationalist sentiments in order to distance the Federal Republic from America and the West.

THE efforts of many of these same figures on the Left to whitewash the Honecker regime in East Germany, and then in the late 80's to delay German unification, will probably keep the SPD out of power for some time to come. Nevertheless, the constituency they represent, with its strength in the German media and academy, appeals to the deep-seated desire of a large part of the German population to opt out of world conflict altogether. This is a problem for Germany's allies, to the extent that the Soviet Union remains a threat and is willing to seek political concessions by brandishing the nuclear arsenal, now one of its only remaining assets as a world power. Germany's half-hearted support of the American-led coalition in the Gulf War, together with its shocking laxity in controlling German exports to Saddam Hussein, suggests that dictatorships other than the Soviet Union may be able to exploit the German dread of international tension, terrorism, and war.

Democracy in united Germany is secure, but the postwar tradition of "militant democracy" which Jeffrey Herf chronicles has much work to do, all the more so if the German people are to integrate successfully the relics of empire brought to light by Amity Shlaes.

Baghdad Kitsch

THE MONUMENT: ART, VULGARITY, AND RESPONSIBILITY IN IRAQ. By SAMIR AL-KHALIL. *University of California Press. 168 pp. $35.00. $16.95 paper.*

CULTURE, HISTORY & IDEOLOGY IN THE FORMATION OF BA'THIST IRAQ, 1968-89. By AMATZIA BARAM. *St. Martin's. 196 pp. $35.00.*

Reviewed by DANIEL PIPES

ONLY a few months ago most Americans saw Iraq as just another third-world country under the rule of a wretched dictatorship. To be sure, it was clear that Saddam Hussein's internal repression was extreme; it was also clear that by attacking Iran in 1980, Saddam had initiated the century's longest conventional war. His bellicose rhetoric of early 1990 showed that he had learned little from those eight years of war. Still, in fundamental ways Saddam did not seem to differ from other noxious dictators. In terms of atrocities, aggressiveness, capricious rule, Baghdad's record seemed not much worse than that of Damascus next door.

The invasion of Kuwait not only had the effect of turning the spotlight on Iraq, and so making more information suddenly available, but it has compelled, or should compel, a deeper look into Iraqi public life. In aid of that project a good place to start is *Republic of Fear*, a book published in early 1989 to little fanfare by the pseudonymous author Samir al-Khalil.*

DANIEL PIPES, *director of the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia, recently published* The Rushdie Affair *(Birch Lane Press) and* Greater Syria *(Oxford University Press).*

* University of California Press. Two paperback versions are now available, from California and from Pantheon.

THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

History and Literature in the Augustan Age

By JOSEPH M. LEVINE.

Joseph Levine here provides a witty and erudite account of the acrimonious quarrel between the "ancients" and the "moderns" that excited the English world of letters from 1690 until the 1730s. According to Levine, this dispute, which Jonathan Swift dubbed "the Battle of the Books," was an installment in the long-standing debate about the relationship of classical learning to modern life. "A masterly account of a major episode in European cultural history."—Anthony Grafton, Princeton University. $29.95

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Republic of Fear is probably the first-ever insider's account to explain the logic behind a Middle Eastern dictatorship. Khalil does this by drawing both on his personal experience in Iraq and by immersing himself in English-language scholarship on tyranny and on the Middle East. He uses these sources to paint a powerful picture of an Iraqi hell, a place where "nothing is as it seems and nothing can be taken for granted."

Republic of Fear deals only with politics. Now, fortuitously, we have two small but spirited books exploring the cultural dimension of Saddam Hussein's kingdom. The one by Khalil himself, entitled simply *The Monument*, muses on the ramifications of a pair of gargantuan archways unveiled in Baghdad in August 1989. The other, by Amatzia Baram of Haifa University, dissects Baghdad's changing nationalist ideologies. The two books complement each other well, with Khalil's close angry reading serving as a case study for Baram's cool historical survey. Together, the books provide sophisticated insights into the life of the mind in Iraq, establishing a sound basis for understanding the ruler and the government that recently led their country to calamity.

Samir al-Khalil recounts how, in 1985, President Saddam Hussein enunciated his vision of a victory monument and how, four years later, he rode his white stallion under a pair of giant steel arches standing at either end of a huge parade ground in central Baghdad. The Victory Arch, Khalil explains, differs from all other such structures (the Arch of Titus in Rome, the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, Washington Square Arch in New York City) in being not architectural but statuesque. Each archway is formed by two forearms ending in clenched fists grasping swords; the swords cross at the apex, forming a bow 130 feet above the ground.

Even more than by the vulgarity and size of the monument, Khalil is intrigued and appalled by its realism. A total of 2,500 helmets are clustered at each base; they were worn by Iranian soldiers killed in action in the war with Iraq. Dead Iraqi soldiers contributed their weapons which, melted down, have metamorphosed into the two pairs of outsized swords. But most odious of all in Khalil's eyes is the fact that the forearms and fists of the Victory Arch are precise replicas of Saddam Hussein's own limbs ("complete with hair follicles, the odd scratch and blemish").

Khalil would be the first to admit that this wretched edifice may well be unworthy of serious discussion; he dwells on it because of its aptness as a symbol of the sordidness of Iraqi political and cultural life. Politically, the Victory Arch reifies Saddam's "personal joy in politics," a joy deriving from the fact that in his Iraq the ruler alone acts politically. Culturally, the "sheer blinding inanity" of the arch points to the near-impossibility of creating significant works of imagination under that raging despotism. Indeed, Khalil goes so far as to condemn as "worthless" everything produced by the Iraqi intelligentsia during the Saddam years.

Following the Czech novelist Milan Kundera, Khalil postulates *kitsch* as a central aspect of totalitarian rule. Unlike some despots who have tried to repress the arts, Saddam Hussein sought to harness them to his rule, and he succeeded. Among the artists so mobilized, opportunism, cynicism, and the instinct to survive drove out more refined sensibilities. Even the serious artists of yesteryear (Iraq's most notable tradition was in sculpture) succumbed to the threats and blandishments of the state. Via state-issued specifications, Saddam suborned the entirety of Iraqi culture to the ruler's whim. Public architecture had special importance in this assertion of state omnipotence; Khalil concludes that "the moment Saddam Hussein turned his dreams into the city of all Iraqis, he snuffed out art and invested *kitsch* with a totalizing sovereignty."

Looking to the future, Khalil is far from optimistic. In contrast to the flimsy statues of older, less durable regimes, torn down by mobs with ropes, Saddam Hussein's monuments "are founded upon cavernous layers of reinforced concrete buried deep under the ground; it will take more than ropes and eager hearts to bring them down." The fact that the Iraqi dictator was still in power in early May of this year, after having suffered one of the most devastating military defeats of modern history, shows the aptness of Khalil's metaphor.

Amatzia Baram's compelling thesis is that government ideology in Iraq has undergone profound changes in the past two decades. When the Ba'thists seized power in 1968, they espoused their party's classic theme: "the Arabs form one nation." From the point of view of the Sunni Arabs who totally dominated the Iraqi Ba'th party, this ideology of radical pan-Arab nationalism had the great advantage of engaging Iraq deeply in the affairs of other (Sunni) Arab states, such as those surrounding the Arab-Israeli conflict. It also had the benefit of neatly excluding the other two major population groups in Iraq, the Sunni Kurds and the Shiite Arabs.

But the tensions thus aroused were too great, for Sunni Arabs constitute just one-quarter of the Iraqi population. Also, it quickly became apparent that less sophisticated Iraqis had difficulty identifying with the abstraction of pan-Arab nationalism. In short, the need to reach out to the majority of the population forced the Ba'thists to modify their principles.

They did so by sloughing off their single-minded preoccupation with Arab unity in favor of a much more Iraq-centered credo. The two approaches were contradictory, but they did entail a very different spirit. Iraq had been but a part of the Arab nation; now it became a whole unto itself. The old ideal of Arab unity gave way to a new one of harmonious relations among the distinct nations of Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and so forth. Instead of a single Arab nation, a loose federation became the ideal; the main constant was that Iraq would play a leading role.

This shift affected virtually all areas of Iraqi life, for the regime sought not just to define its own mission, but to reshape the identity of its citizens. As Baram shows, Arab folklore, archeology, rites, symbols, art, theater, poetry, and

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history were replaced by their Iraqi equivalents.

Some of the pleasure in reading Baram's fine study lies in savoring the absurdities of Iraqi nationalist excess he uncovers. Thus, in 1980, just after the war with Iran began, Saddam Hussein advised his less literate countrymen that if they had difficulty reading Ba'th principles, all they had to do was "sniff the soil of this land." Hammurabi's biography was reworked so that it bore, in Baram's words, a "strange resemblance" to Saddam's own. In a typical conflation of time, the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III, who beat King Jehu of Israel in 842 B.C.E., was hailed as the first Iraqi king "to work toward the liberation of Palestine from the Israelites." And so forth.

Baram ends his study in 1989, just before Saddam Hussein's sudden adoption of still another ideology. As war with the United States and its allies loomed, Saddam wrapped himself more and more tightly in the green flag of Islam. In January 1991, he had the Islamic slogan "God Is Great" put on the Iraqi flag, and announced that this was "the lofty banner our fighters are guided by and believe in." Like other Muslim leaders before him (Nasser, Sadat, Arafat), Saddam discovered the utility of Islam in time of crisis. By the time the war began, Saddam sounded more like the Ayatollah Khomeini than his old secularist self.

THE ease with which a ruler like Saddam can skate from one program to another points to the superficiality of ideology in the Middle East. So, too, does the fact that what happened in Iraq under Saddam Hussein is very similar to what has happened in Syria under Hafez al-Assad. In both regimes, the ideal of a single, grand Arab nation was quietly dropped in favor of a less visionary, more local nationalist impulse, with Saddam's aspiration to a Greater Iraq (conquering Kuwait, trying to take Khuzistan province from Iran) paralleled by Assad's efforts to cobble together a Greater Syria (by invading Lebanon, controlling the Palestinian organizations, leaning on the Jordanian monarchy).

Saddam Hussein is a strongman, ruling on behalf of himself and his small community, adopting whatever instruments further his power; ideology has been but a cover for those ends. What counts are not the words but having the clout to get one's arms and fists reproduced on a monumental scale, down to the very follicles.

Children & God

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF CHILDREN. By ROBERT COLES. *Houghton Mifflin. 358 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by CHESTER E. FINN, JR.

ROBERT COLES has spent most of the past 30 years listening to children talk, gently prodding them to share with him and his tape recorder their hopes and fears, their beliefs and ideas, their anxieties and satisfactions. His inquiries have carried him to Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, as well as into nearly every corner of the United States. And they have provided much of the content of an astonishingly prolific career. This is Coles's 51st book, the 20th written primarily about—or for—children, and the eighth (Coles says the last) of his distinctive studies of their inner lives.

Trained (by the likes of Anna Freud and Erik Erikson) as a child psychiatrist and analyst, gifted with a keen ear, good eye, and agreeable prose style, Coles gives over most of his pages here as in his previous volumes to direct quotations from (and drawings by) the boys and girls he has interviewed. Deftly selected and shaped to illumine points that Coles rarely states baldly, these protracted excerpts resemble interwoven case studies. One must enjoy prolonged immersion in the thoughts and words of children to relish these volumes.

Not that Coles removes himself from the picture; in truth, few paragraphs pass without some comment on what a youngster has said, Coles's reaction, his strategy for eliciting more, or a fragment of his own life that the child's words call to mind. Yet the children occupy center stage while Coles stays in the wings, giving cues, comfort, and occasional direction.

It is practically impossible to gauge the force of that direction. If he did not invent this genre—part sociology, part biography (and autobiography), part essay, part clinical file—Robert Coles is surely its foremost contemporary practitioner. So skillful is he that, while we can often glimpse him drawing his witnesses out, it is hard to tell which of the views conveyed through their voices are intrinsically important to the children uttering them and which are significant chiefly to the author.

Were these doctrinaire or even highly opinionated books, that haziness would be grounds for concern. Too often of late, crusaders for one or another political cause—nuclear non-proliferation, environmentalism, etc.—have drafted children as surrogates, quoting them selectively, cultivating anxieties in their minds, using their innocence, their alleged suffering, their presumed clarity of vision and honesty of expression as vehicles for adult agendas.* Robert Coles does not work that way. He is an explicator, not an exploiter. Although his choice of topic obviously determines the basic direction of his inquiry, he is exquisitely, sometimes painfully, self-conscious about his own words and behavior during these conversations, striving to eliminate static and distortion from the sound system through which we are invited to eavesdrop.

He is also too respectful of his young subjects to drag them into disputes among grown-ups, and too confident of their resilience and adaptability to succumb to the easy suggestion that adults must intervene to shield them from ideas and events. During the recent war in the Persian Gulf, for example, as psychologists, educators, and counselors of every sort stumbled over one

CHESTER E. FINN, JR.'s *new book*, We Must Take Charge: Our Schools and Our Children, *has just been published by The Free Press.*

* See "The Nuclear Bubble" by Joseph Adelson (COMMENTARY, November 1990) and "Terrorizing Children" by Chester E. Finn, Jr., and Joseph Adelson (COMMENTARY, April 1985).

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another in their rush to help children cope with the "feelings," "fears," and "anxieties" presumed to have been triggered by the flow of televised mayhem (and by the fact that thousands had parents serving in dangerous places), Coles's was one of the few voices of calm. "It has been possible in the past," he said, "for children in the United States to get through wars without the massive intervention of school psychologists and television personalities, and I rather suspect it will be possible in the future if we only give children a chance." Giving children a chance could well be his motto.

COLES came late to the study of children's spiritual and religious lives. (Earlier volumes in the series have probed the sources of youngsters' moral and political sensibilities, and their responses to trying conditions that range from the deprivations of sharecropper families to the subtler ambivalences of affluence.) It took him, he writes, a while to "look inward and examine my own assumptions about religion as a psychological phenomenon and as a social and historical force." But the detached rationalism and scientism of the psychiatrist warred both with Coles's own powerful moral impulses and with the mounting evidence in his notes and tape recordings that many children's actions and ideas cannot be satisfactorily understood without considering their religiosity.

On the whole the book was worth waiting for. In its pages we find ourselves getting remarkably well-acquainted with Haroon, an eleven-year-old Muslim boy of Pakistani origin, now living in London; with Alice, a working-class girl of ten from a Boston suburb; with Junior, a twelve-year-old member of an ardent Protestant family in east Tennessee; with Leah, whose devout Judaism comforts her amid the terrors of acute leukemia; and with dozens more. Most are in the range of ten to twelve years old, mature enough to express themselves in interesting ways but not yet muzzled by the self-consciousness of adolescence.

Coles's distinctive blend of social scientist and humanist turns out to be admirably suited to this topic. The empiricist in him accumulates data, forswears unsubstantiated conclusions, shuns premature generalizations, sifts and probes and repeats to make sure that he has got it right, that he understands what his informants mean as well as what they say. Yet the domains he seeks here to illumine are the timeless puzzles of the philosopher and theologian, the stuff of novels, poems, plays, proverbs, and prayers. It is no coincidence that Coles's personal heroes include the novelist Walker Percy (to whose memory this book is dedicated), the poet William Carlos Williams, and the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, as well as august figures of modern psychology. In an age when the deconstructionists would have us think we must understand politics before we can parse words, Coles reminds us here that it is also possible—and infinitely more rewarding—to take words as glimpses into what is going on in hearts and souls, clues about personal answers to mankind's eternal questions.

Such answers are more easily described than explained. Coles offers a rich map of children's spiritual lives but characteristically hesitates to draw large conclusions. His evidence leads me, however, to several improved understandings.

First, religions are not interchangeable, even among the young. At least for children reared in devout families, one can discern the imprint of the theology and practices of particular faiths as well as the influence of generalized religiosity. Coles's chapter titles—"Christian Salvation," "Islamic Surrender," and "Jewish Righteousness"—hint at some of the major differences.

Second, an active spiritual life is often visible at a surprisingly tender age, even among those with no tie to "organized" religion. Coles quotes thirteen-year-old Gary:

> You take the kids whose folks aren't into any religion; we have lots of them in our school, and they're no different than anyone, and some of them—I talk with them about what they believe—are really great, because they ask a lot of questions about life, and they want to stop and talk about things, about what's right and wrong, and what you should believe, and after I'll talk with them, I'll say to myself, hey, maybe if you have no religion, you end up being more religious. You know what I mean?

An "irony worthy of Niebuhr," Coles observes of this remark, recalling a "memorable sermon" he heard the great theologian deliver decades earlier, one that helped to fix in the then-young medical student's mind a distinction between "spiritual" and "religious" that deepens and informs the present volume.

Third, while their parents' values, beliefs, and practices are, not surprisingly, the most powerful influences on children's spiritual lives as well as on their daily behavior, more is happening in their souls than can be explained by parents alone. Where does Margarita, one of seven children of a consumptive mother and long-absent father, living in desperate poverty in a Rio shantytown, get her extraordinary inner strength? Not from school, with which she has scant acquaintance. (Though Coles does not remark on it, the slight impact of school on the matters examined here must strike—and should alarm—any educator who reads these pages.) Surely such reserves do not come entirely from her dying mother, trudging off to work each day as a hotel chambermaid in Copacabana. Nor wholly from her priest, whom Margarita—an infrequent church attender—regards with a blend of respect, contempt, and dismay. Something is going on within her that conventional nature-nurture theories cannot satisfactorily explain. The word "character" comes to mind. But what are its wellsprings?

Robert Coles provides few direct answers. But he does a great deal more than ask hard questions, and with his help we may draw a little nearer to answers of our own.

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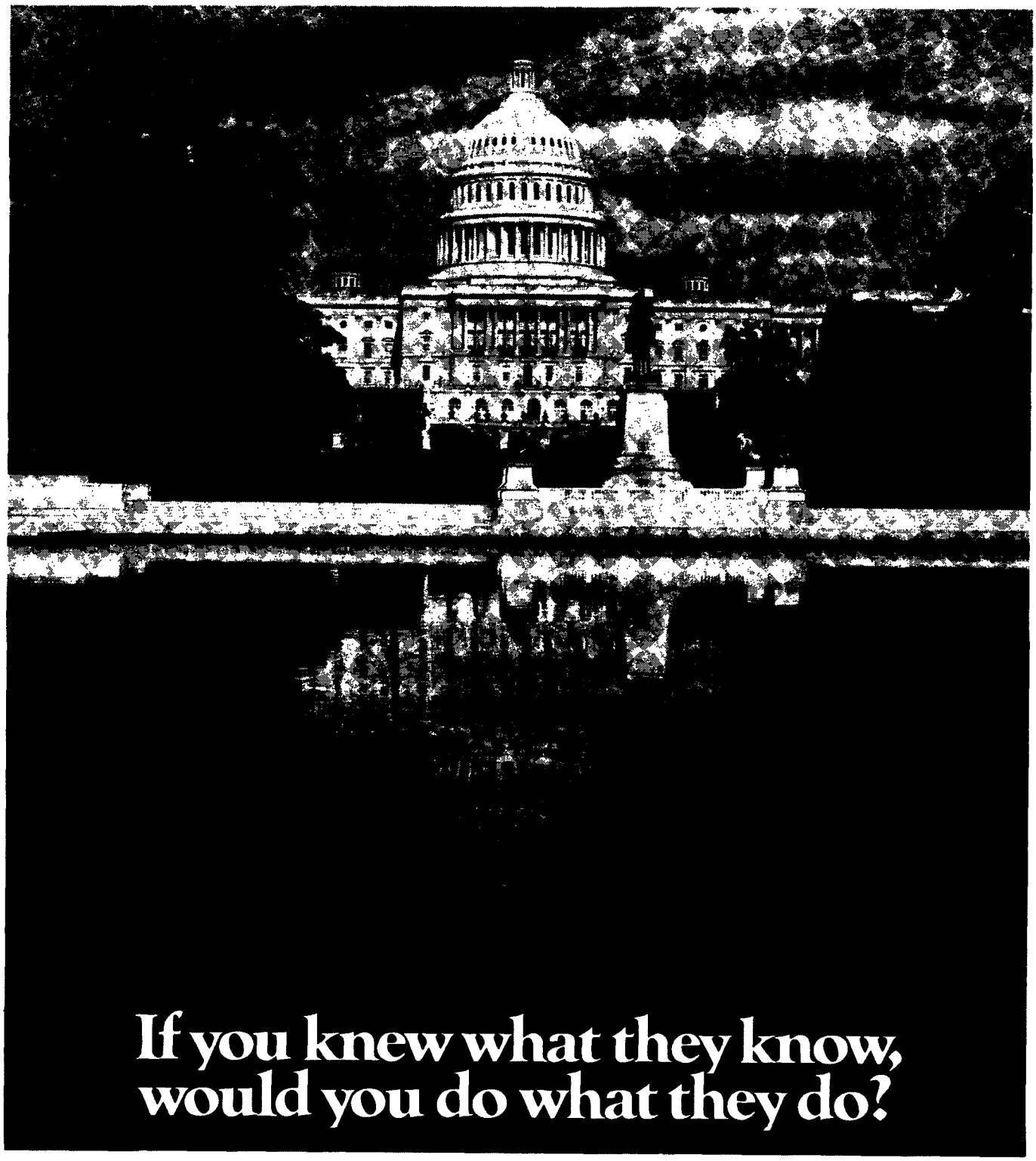

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We're accused of being obsessed with perfection, precision and meticulous attention to every detail. Thank you.

The little things on a flight tell you a lot about an airline. So you'll notice that at Lufthansa, your drink and meal arrive at the same time. And that your electronic headset is free even in Economy Class. Or if you don't want to eat, drink or watch movies, you can get a "Do Not Disturb" sign. Of course, the way our crew works together also adds to your flight. Things like these show our passion to make your flight enjoyable. One you feel in everyone at Lufthansa. From the wine steward who inspects every bottle to the pilot who gets you there on time. *A passion for perfection*℠ that ensures you the best flying experience possible.

A passion for perfection.℠

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Lufthansa is a participant in the mileage programs of United, Delta, USAir and Continental. See your Travel Agent for details.

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